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THE UNKNOWN GOD

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

WE are told that the first question asked by the infant Thomas Aquinas was: 'What is God?' The pursuit of that question became his life's work; to it he gave all his energy and ability. Yet from the time of his earliest writings he had reached the conclusion that in this life he would never find the answer. '*Nescimus*', he will say—'We do not know.' And he will repeat St John Damascene's '*In Deo quid est, dicere impossibile est*'—'It is impossible to say of God what he is.' St Thomas says this over and over again in his writings, from the earliest to the last. He insists not only that we *do not* know what God is—the essence, nature and 'whatness' of God—but also that we *cannot* know it: *non possumus*.¹ He loves to repeat the assertion of the *Mystical Theology* of the pseudo-Denys that the most perfect union with God is union with the utterly Unknown.²

Although it will be found that all saints and sages of any consequence, whether in East or West, whether Christian or non-Christian, are in full agreement with St Thomas on this point, many of his own professed disciples seem to have watered down his teaching to some extent. They will tell us that although it is true that of course we cannot fully know the essence or nature of God in this life, we can and do have a vague, inadequate or (as they call it) a 'non-quidditative' knowledge of the Divine Nature, and they hold that this is what St Thomas really means.

But (as Père Sertillanges and others have pointed out) this is very hard to square with St Thomas's own categorical and unqualified language, which says quite clearly that we do not know the Divine Nature at all, and that it is utterly (*omnino*) unknown to us. Moreover, this interpretation does not seem to square with the cogent reasons which St Thomas gives to explain *why* we cannot know what God is. This is not the place to enter into the controversy or to examine all the technicalities. It must suffice to say that for St Thomas knowledge of anything whatever is impossible without

¹ e.g. in *Summa Theologica*, I, 1, 7 ad 1. All references are to the *Summa* unless otherwise stated.

² *Ille qui melius unitur Deo in hac vita unitur ei sicut omnino ignoto.* (e.g. I, xii, 13, 1.)

some sort of mental image, form or *species* of what is known, however vague, incomplete, or inadequate, and such images or forms must be something definite and finite. There can therefore be no such image or form of the Infinite, and any such image or form which is taken to represent the divine essence will positively misrepresent it (I, xii, 2). Only the direct, beatific vision of God in heaven, in which God himself in some incomprehensible way takes the place of such an image, will yield us any knowledge at all of what God is, and even this can never fully comprehend him (*ibid*, arts. 4, 5, 7). St Thomas does indeed allow that we can in this life have this sort of inadequate, indistinct, 'non-quidditative' knowledge of *created spirits*, that is of angels (I, lxxxviii, 1), though even of these we can never know what each angel is as distinct from another. (One of the difficulties in admitting that we can have a 'non-quidditative' knowledge of God lies in the fact that it reduces God, in respect of our knowledge, to the level of an angel.) Between us and angels there is at least something in common: they like us are in the category of finite beings, created substances. But between us and God there is no *tertium quid* which is in any way common. There is no third term to which God and his creature can be referred, or which would so much as supply a point of comparison (I, xiii, 5). God must be outside all classes and categories, as well as outside the possibility of being imaged or conceived (I, iii, 5).

But if this is so, it raises a lot of questions, not only theoretic, philosophical questions, but very practical ones as well. If St Thomas is right when he says we cannot know what God is, then are we not driven to stark agnosticism? If he found the question was unanswerable, why did he not drop it? If he concluded that he could know nothing about what God is, how came it that he himself talked and wrote so much about God? How can we talk and argue and write about something when we know we do not know what we are talking about?

Let us summarise as briefly and simply as possible his own answers to these questions, though these are not always quite easy to square with what is said in some of the books which claim to reproduce his thought.

Although we do not and cannot know *what* God is, we can know *that* he is. Or, more exactly, we know and can prove that there is something or someone which human beings call 'God' or

'Divine'. We know this, not because we know *his* existence directly, but because we do know the existence of other things. We have direct acquaintance with all sorts of happenings, changes, productions, things, values, strivings. The famous Five Ways set out to prove that these things simply could not exist, indeed nothing at all could exist or happen, unless something Unknown, which we call divine, somehow existed (I, ii, 3). We cannot here pause to examine these Five Ways and argue to their validity. They are nowadays commonly called 'proofs for the existence of God', which is rather unfortunate and misleading: they are never so called by St Thomas. For what we can prove, we know, and St Thomas holds that we can no more know the existence (or *esse*) of God, than we can know his essence (they must be, in fact, one and the same). The Five Ways enable us to know, not the being or existence of God (*Dei esse*), but only that what men call God is, or exists (*Deum esse*) (I, iii, 4 ad 2). They show that *unless* there is some unknown ground or source (*causa* is St Thomas's word, but this does not of course mean 'cause' in the restricted sense in which it is used in modern science) on which everything ultimately depends, then nothing could ever exist or happen at all. This is not to say (as is sometimes claimed today) that God is an 'explanation' of the universe, for we cannot 'explain' what is already better known by what is unknown. But we do claim that if there were no God, there could not be anything else. St Thomas's position differs from that of modern agnostics because while modern agnosticism says simply, 'We do not know, and the universe is a mysterious riddle', a thomist says 'We do not know what the answer is, but we do know that there is a mystery behind it all which we do not know, and if there were not, there would not even be a riddle. This Unknown we call *God*. If there were no God, there would be no universe to be mysterious, and nobody to be mystified.'

But although God is a mystery, and we cannot know in this life what it is, does this mean we can say nothing whatever on the subject? St Thomas quotes approvingly the pseudo-Denys to the effect that (God is best known and praised in utter silence: he adds however that 'this does not mean that we may think or say nothing at all about him, but that we must realise that he always transcends anything we can think or say about him' (*In Boethium De Trin.* II, 1 ad 6).

But, if we do not know what he is, how can we think or say anything about him? In the first place, once it is given that there is a mystery on which all else depends, we can say quite definitely what that mystery is *not*. 'Since we cannot know what God is, but only what he is *not*, we are not able to study *how* God is, but rather how he is *not*. . . . For it can be shown in what manner God is *not* by denying of him what does not belong to him.' (I, iii, prologus.) It can be shown quite definitely that this mystery called God could *not* be material, *not* physical, *not* a part of anything else, *not* consisting of parts of any sort. Also, that it therefore must be one and not many (for there can be no difference where there is not some sort of composition), and must be beyond all classes and categories (I, iii, *passim*). This mystery cannot be limited in any way, and so must be infinite (I, vii, 1, 2), not subject to change and so not existing in time (I, x), nor (having no parts) extended in space (I, viii). In short, it—or he—is nothing definite or definable at all, and nothing definite can be it. *Un dieu défini est un dieu fini*.

As we can see, this approach says nothing positive about God at all: it consists entirely, not of affirmations, but of denials. The Greeks call it *apophatic* theology—'denying' theology. St Thomas calls it the *via remotionis* or the *via negativa*: the negative way of removing from God all that he is not. As St Thomas sets it out, it looks like no more than a matter of words and logic. But in its origin it is much more than that, it is a way of the whole soul to reach out to God in his transcendence, and is a way by no means peculiar to Christians. We find the like in Plotinus as well as St John of the Cross and *The Cloud of Unknowing*; we find a similar process of 'stripping' all images and ideas vividly related in the Indian *Upanishads*. Likewise the Hindu contemplatives seek to become Godlike by the exercise called *pratyahara*, in which they say '*Neti, Neti*' ('not this, not this') to every thought, image and feeling that comes into their minds, recalling the '*Nada*' of St John of the Cross. The same way leads in China to the celebrated opening words of the *Tao Te Ching*—

The Tao that can be told of is not the Unchanging Tao,
The names that can be named are not the changeless Name.

It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang . . .

Only he that rids himself for ever of desires can see the Secret
Essences.

—and brought the Taoists to declare that ‘He who knows Tao does not talk about it: he who talks about it does not know it’.

Yet besides—but not without—this *via remotionis*, there is the *via causalitatis* (‘the way of causality’) and the *via eminentiae* (‘the way of transcendence’³). Just because all things that we *do* experience—

are effects dependent on a cause, we are able to be led from them to knowing *that* God is, and to what must pertain to him in so far as he is the ultimate cause of all, for he must transcend all that is caused. And so we know his relationship to creatures to the extent that he is the first cause of all—also the difference of creatures from this cause in so far as he is not any of those things which are caused by him—and we know that these are not denied of him on account of any lack on his part, but because he surpasses them all. (I, xii, 13.)

Hence, ‘although we cannot know what God is, we use his effects, whether of nature or of grace, instead of any definition’ of what he is (I, I, 7 ad 1). The fact that other things exist and happen compels us to say *that* he exists as their ultimate uncaused cause, but the fact that other things are our only reason for saying that he is at all, we must deny each and all of them of him (the *via remotionis*), yet we must also say that he transcends them all (the *via eminentiae*). The Greeks call this *kataphatic* or affirmative theology.

It would be out of place here to follow in detail St Thomas’s detailed study (especially in *Summa* I, xiii) of the way in which we can have any positive thoughts or make any affirmative statements about God, and of what sort of meaning and reference they can have to what remains utterly unknown. It must suffice to say that such positive attributions as we can make about God leave the unknown mystery of God intact. ‘All affirmations we can make about God are’, St Thomas says, ‘not such as our minds may rest in them, nor of such sort that we may suppose he does not transcend them.’ (*De Div. Nominibus*, I, 2.) Our language about God can have no greater range and validity than our knowledge of him; hence we can speak of him only in words derived from his

3 I, xii, 13. Cf. *De Divinis Nominibus* I, 3: ‘The last achievement of which we are capable in this life in knowing God is the realisation that he is beyond anything we can think, and so the naming of God which is by way of denial (*remotio*) is supremely appropriate’.

creatures, and no name we use to 'mean' God can express the divine essence (I, xiii, 1). All human words originally signify some creature or effect of God, and therefore, at best, some reflection or refraction of the boundless Light of God—which remains darkness to us. They can therefore only be *applied* to God, and as applied to him have a meaning which we cannot grasp, though this meaning has some relationship (*analogy*, based on causality) to the meaning with which we are familiar from our experience of creatures. Even the name 'God' or 'Deus' itself can be derived only, St Thomas insists, from some created *effect* or *work* of God (I, xiii, 8). But whatever we say affirmatively about God does not make him any less unknown in himself, for all our words must be derived from our knowledge of his effects, not from our knowledge (or ignorance) of himself. 'Hence the perfection of all our knowledge about God is said (by Denys) to be a knowing of the unknown, for then supremely is our mind found to know God when it most perfectly knows that the being of God transcends everything whatever that can be apprehended in this life. And thus, although it remains unknown *what* God is, it is known *that* he is.' (*In Boeth. De Trin.* I, 2 ad 1.)

It is sometimes suggested that, while natural reason only knows God as cause, and therefore can talk about him only in terms of his effects, supernatural revelation nevertheless gives us knowledge of the divine essence 'in itself'. St Thomas knows nothing of this. We have seen that he says that in talking of God we can only 'use his effects, whether of nature or of grace'. And he tells us expressly that, 'Neither a Catholic nor a pagan knows the nature of God as it is in itself, but both know it only by way of some conception of causality, of transcendence or of negation'. (I, xiii, 10 ad 1.) The object of divine faith itself is still the Unseen and Unknown—*non visum, non scitum* (II-II, i, 3).

What then does revelation give us that natural reason does not? St Thomas answers,

Although by the revelation, which is of grace, we do not know in this life what God is, and so [even by grace] we can be united to him only as to one unknown to us, still it enables us to know him more fully in so far as it displays to us both more and better effects, and enables us to attribute to God certain things which are beyond the scope of natural reason, such as that God is three and one. (I, xii, 13 ad 1.)

God is thus no less of an unknown God to the believer than to the unbeliever, to St John of the Cross than to Shankara or Plotinus, and we may say that to the Christian believer he is more, rather than less, mysterious. What the Christian believer has to deal with are '*plures et excellentiores effectus*'—more and better effects—but still only effects. Truly, they are effects of the very utmost importance, for they constitute the Gospel, the Good News of salvation, the *verbum salutis* on which ultimately our forgiveness, health and happiness depend. They are effects which, since they include the coming of God made flesh and the results of the sending of his Spirit, enable us to say things about God that we could not otherwise say—for instance, that he is trinity as well as one. But never in this life do they make any exception to the rule that 'We do not know what God is', and that 'we are most perfectly at one with him when we know that he is utterly unknown'. Paradoxically, we are most in his light when we are most in the dark about him. In our way to the promised land he is a dark cloud in our daylight, and a pillar of fire in our night.⁴ St Thomas tells us that even 'regarding those things which are revealed by God, and are set forth for our faith . . . we are scarcely able to hear the truth in the words of the holy Scripture, for they are as but a dewdrop falling upon us; still less can anybody in this life "be able to behold the thunders of his greatness"' (*Contra Gentiles*, IV, i, cf. Job 26, 14). Not only, St Thomas says in the same chapter of the *Contra Gentiles*, can we not see God in this life, but we cannot perfectly know even the 'ways to come to know him'.

Even when God was talking to Moses 'as a man talks to his friend' he told him, 'Thou canst not see my face, for no man shall see me and live . . . Thou shalt see my back parts, but my face thou canst not see' (Exodus, 23, 20-23). 'Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour' says the prophet Isaiah (45, 15). It is instructive to run one's finger under the word *hide* in a Bible concordance, and see how often God is reproached with hiding himself from his most devoted servants. And hide himself he must, for so soon as we become satisfied with any picture or image⁵ of God, we are in danger of idolatry: of mistaking the

4 cf. *Bhagavadgita*, II, 69: '... knowledge of the Atman is dark night to the many. . . . What they think is daylight to the seer is darkness.'

5 It seems useful to understand our psychological image of God, not only (or

comprehensible image for the reality, of losing the numinousness, the mystery, the transcendent majesty of God. So soon as, consciously or unconsciously, we suppose we have grasped God, he must elude us, for he is always beyond the furthestmost advance we make in knowledge about him. That is why image-breaking is as much part and parcel of man's religion as image-making—the story of Job and his disillusionment is a famous example of this, foreshadowing the *Eloi, Eloi lamma sabachtani* of Golgotha. God might be called a Fox of heaven for ever eluding the human hounds.

Yet, St Thomas shows us, the more we know of the *works* of God, both within the human soul and without in nature, the more we know about him—and the less we find we know (*Contra Gentiles*, II, 1, 2). In these days when the discoveries of science make nature increasingly mysterious and frightening, the more our familiar pictures of the universe are dissolved, the more we know of God, and the less we find we had known. Just because we only know God in his works, the more we know of his works, the more we know of him; but, on the other hand, the more we are sure we have grasped God, and that he conforms to our own *image* of him, the less shall we be inclined to penetrate further into the unexplored regions of nature or grace—themselves the reflections of his own infinite mystery. That is, as the psalms and prophets say, the trouble about idolatry—the fixed image petrifies and stultifies its worshipper into its own likeness, inhibiting his own growth by preventing further knowledge of God and his works.⁶

'No man has seen God at any time', says St John (John, 1, 18). All our images and concepts of God are stepping-stones which must be discarded if they are not to become idols, and we ourselves become stocks and stones, incapable of penetrating more deeply in knowledge of God through his works. But, St John adds, 'the only-begotten of the Father has revealed him'. In following God made man in his life and teaching, death and rising,

necessarily) as a visual phantasy or concept, but as the focus of a whole complex of conscious or unconscious ideas, feelings, emotions, views and associations, often very tenacious, which should be no less subject to revision if we are to guard against 'peril of idolatry'.

6 e.g. 'They that make them [inanimate idols] shall become like them.' (Psalm 113, 8.)

and that in the power and love of the Spirit given us by the one God who is Father and Son and Spirit, we become *Filii in Filio*—children of God in the Child of God—and establish the right relation to the Unknown, now revealed to us as mysterious Trinity.

But what is the use of it all? What is the point of seeking to know the unknown and unknowable? Just this, St Thomas replies, that in our search for knowledge about God we find the truth about ourselves, our purpose and destiny, and on this our whole weal depends (I, i, 1). He recalls how even the pagan Aristotle had said that the very least and most imperfect knowledge we can have of divine things is more precious than the most precise knowledge about anything else (I, i, 5 ad 1).

To the objection that it is futile to try to know the unknowable, to grasp the boundless, St Thomas answers with St Hilary: '*Qui pie infinita persequitur, etsi non attingat aliquando, tamen proficiet prodeundo*'.⁷

⁷ 'He who reverently pursues the Boundless, even though he will never attain it, will himself advance by pushing forward in his pursuit.' (Quoted *In Boeth. De Trin.* II, 1 ad 7.)

THE WORSHIP OF MYSTERY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

FAITH and Worship, like Christian life itself, are principally concerned with mystery, the divine mysteries with which we are brought into contact through the Incarnation. It is no mere coincidence that both the Christian faith and the Christian liturgy are essentially bound up with the Christian mystery: and to go even further, the very mysteries of pagan cults apparently so foreign to any aspect of the Christian religion, are themselves related by essential ties to the faith and the worship of the Christian. We must first establish the connection between all these elements before we can see the importance of the life of faith in the life of worship.

When man is confronted by the real God he is at once presented with that which is all knowable and so infinite in its perfection as to be beyond his own capacity to know. The reality of the divine being is too intelligible for man, like the intensity of light that obscures the objects of vision. Confronted by the reality of God he cannot recount what he sees, but rather is he overcome by the awareness of what is utterly beyond his possession or mastery. This is the Mystery and man's first attitude is not one of affirmation but of worship, the attitude of the creature before the source of every creature.

And Moses said: I will go and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he went forward to see, he called to him out of the midst of the bush and said: Moses, Moses. And he answered: Here I am. And he said: Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And he said: I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face: for he durst not look at God. (Exodus 3.)

Before the mystery of 'I am who am' Moses bowed down accepting the word of God in faith and worshipping the object of his belief. Faith is the attitude of man towards the 'I am who am' as soon as he perceives this reality. St Paul shows how faith in this way was always the source of divine worship. Faith, he

says, is the substance of things to be hoped for 'By faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God, and that from invisible things visible things might be made. By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice . . .' (Hebrews 11). The effect of the Presence is to lead the human creature to offer sacrifice beginning with the sacrifice of his mind to all Truth, abandoning its very life-spring in its autonomy in judging, but concluding in the full, external sacrifice offering the whole being and all being back to its source.

The mystery of faith, then, is the mystery of cult. This is not limited to the specifically Christian faith and worship; for the Presence with its infinite depths of reality is everywhere and at all times. Every bush, every small flower and great tree is in fact burning and not consumed by the Presence which is closer to it than it is to itself. That is what St Paul means: 'By faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God'. From every creature comes the voice of God and within is discovered the source of every creature. This every man is bound to begin to realise; when the storms rise and destroy his flocks and harvest, he feels his very being is threatened and he turns towards the mysterious source of his being. He placates his gods with sacrifice; he invents elaborate ceremonies round the elemental waters and fire and earth. Truly he 'invents' them, for he finds them in part within him. This is not Christian sacrifice or Christian faith, but it is man confronted with Him who Is, and man reacts in the same way to the same mystery—he worships and he believes. Man, every man, cannot escape this relationship with the Presence from whom he derives his being; it is inevitable that there should be a natural disposition in human nature for faith and worship, because God has made this nature and this nature wherever it exists is dependent upon him, with a dependence which is that of a conscious being. Consciousness reacts to the great Mystery of God by faith and worship. If you present a young animal for the first time with water you do not have to demonstrate the rubrics of lapping it with the tongue or sucking at it through the lips or diving into it, as the case may be. The animal has within it the dispositions to drink the way his fathers drank or swim the way his fathers swam. The presence of the water immediately calls forth this power. The presence of the Mystery immediately brings forth capacities of faith and worship which were part of the man's nature as an

intelligent creature. The natural disposition in man for faith and worship lies in his being related to the Being.

But where faith is concerned outside the true revelation of God by himself, these dispositions give a conflicting and cacophonous sound when they are brought to the surface of reality. The beliefs are infinite in their diversity and contradictions. But the worship, although so varied and diverse in its manifestation of cult and sacrifice, nevertheless has a certain unity, and approaches much closer to the true worship, as St Paul pointed out to the Athenians: 'What therefore you worship without knowing it, that I preach to you'. And he goes on to preach in terms of this essential presence of God in all things; the great Mystery that all are bound to worship knowingly or without knowing. (Acts 17.) The rites already express, without the human expression of words, the realities of the Mystery; they show by symbols and gestures what revelation is to make explicit in the faith. In other words the primitive religions—and indeed all religions that have developed in good intention and apart from the specific guidance of God who gives the faith—have expressed in these outward symbols the inner mystery, neither of which they properly understood. St Paul preaches in words of revelation and faith what the Athenians have expressed in their unknowing celebrations of the mysteries. '*Teste David cum Sybilla.*' The rites surrounding the Dying God expressed an attempt to share in the redemption by Christ without the knowledge that there be a Christ. These mysteries, then, are the first unwitting gestures of faith trying to express the inexpressible, trying to come into real contact with the 'Reality' which mysteriously lies hidden beneath things of any existence.

We can say now, with our faith instructed by the revelation of Jesus Christ, that the Mystery of God present within and around and above all creation is the mystery of the Threefold Personal God. Before the Word became man to give us this faith, the Mystery was the same though man could not know. He tried to express the mystery and to receive the impress of its reality upon himself by means of religious cult. So he sacrificed to the Mystery, in honour of the Mystery, and in that central act of liturgical worship rather than in any words or traditional mythology he came near to piercing through the outer crust of appearance and reaching the Presence of the Triune. St Paul, in the same sermon to the Athenians, said that for the one approaching God it was

necessary to believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of the righteous. This in fact was what pagan worship professed in its sacrifice. It was because the primitive and the pagan approached God that they had an inkling of this fundamental belief. It could be seen, no doubt, in germ in some of their mythology and strange beliefs; but it really existed here in their sacrifice precisely because they were striving to approach the Mystery. In all this worship, therefore, the pagan was tasting the first sweetness of faith, and preparing the way for the true faith and true worship which sprang from the fuller, deeper revelation of the Mystery by Christ.

The modernist, of course, who denied the objective reality of this Mystery was led to maintain that the different ways of worshipping God or the gods gradually developed the different faiths, that instead of the worship being created by the Presence, the Presence in all the variety of explanation and relationship with the world was created by the worship; the faith emerged from the way people behaved in their religious worship. For the modernist the ancient phrase *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi* was made to mean that it was prayer in all its variety of expression, both verbal and dramatic, that created the creed, that, springing up from man's inner subconscious, the law of his psychology produced these extensions and projections of his ideas and so became his beliefs. The modernist seems to have had his facts perfectly correct, but he leapt to the wrong conclusions and put the cart before the horse, the cut before the knife. He was not sufficiently sure of the objective reality of the Presence to see that when the sun shines vigorously the plants curl up in different shapes according to the nature of their fronds and stems, and when the Presence of the Mystery shines on Man he bows down and his bows and gestures of reverence vary according to the nature of his history and culture.

But having made this simple adjustment by putting objective truth first before subjective apprehension of the truth, then we can see how important is the dictum of *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*. The law of Prayer is the law of human nature presented by the divine mystery. At first this mystery is presented by the rather vague and not always certain voice of nature, with its regular seasons and its cycle of life and death. And from this man bursts forth in praise of Sun and Rain, and he bakes the newly-reaped corn in the shape

of the moon and takes it to his goddess. Next the mystery is presented by the certain but diverse and multitudinous voice of many prophets beginning with the greatest of Prophets, Moses himself, who, after Adam, had approached the Mystery nearer than any living man. From this contact burst forth the prayer and praise of the Israelites:

Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified: the horse and the rider he hath thrown into the sea. . . . Let fear and dread fall upon them, in the greatness of thy arm; let them become immovable as a stone, until thy people, O Lord, pass by. . . . Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in thy most firm habitation which thou hast made, O Lord: thy sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. . . . So Mary the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went forth after her with timbrels and with dances. And she began the song to them, saying: Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified: the horse and the rider he has thrown into the sea. (Exodus 15, 1-21.)

Or again Moses breaks forth in a prayer springing from his contact with the Presence of the Mystery:

Hear, O ye heavens, the things I speak; let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth. Let my doctrine gather as the rain, let my speech distil as the dew, as a shower upon the herb, and as drops upon the grass. Because I will invoke the name of the Lord: give ye magnificence to our God. The works of God are perfect, and all his ways are judgments: God is faithful and without iniquity, he is just and right. (Deuteronomy 32, 1-4.)

And the Presence in the cloud covered the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled it, so that even Moses could not enter for the brightness of that splendour (Exodus, 40). And in honour of that presence came the goats and rams and lambs, the oxen and the turtledoves to be slaughtered and eaten, or burnt before the Lord who is mighty and the source of all life. So the Israelites, centred on the presence of the Mystery, necessarily prayed and worshipped and believed. But it was not permitted them to enter into the inner sanctuary of the mystery and their faith and worship remained crude and superficial.

Finally, the Mystery is presented by the one Word of God, permitting man to be enveloped in the mystery of the Trinity

itself. The mystery now is the concrete one of the second person of the Trinity become man; the Word made flesh brings the Presence down into the life of everyman with the result that his reverence and worship is more interior than before and more interlocked with his faith. But even so it is not even now a question of intellectual affirmations which are subsequently expressed in the form of rites and ceremonies. This was a much later development. At first it remained the simple approach of the worshipper to the Truth of God become man. The prayers and actions of the men and women thrown together round Christ were at first those of people who are certain only of one thing—the saving mystery of this man. St Peter expressed his conviction that this man was the Son of the living God. And the apostles fell at his feet in supplication at times of peril: 'Lord save us, we perish'. But when it came to accepting the different truths which the Word was revealing to them to constitute their faith, they first of all preferred to cling to this one saving Presence without any further judgments. So when our Lord reveals the duty of eating his flesh and drinking his blood which was to become the heart of Christian worship, the apostles prefer to repeat their act of faith in the Presence without committing themselves to further affirmations: 'To whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!' Until after Pentecost, at least, they are weak and unsure of themselves in expressing Christian truths which were becoming the articles of the faith, but they were readier to do and to act their acceptance of the Mystery of Emmanuel, God with us.

Christ, therefore, taking into his hands the loaf to be blessed on that vigil of the Pasch, says 'This is my body. . . . Do this in commemoration of me.' Immediately the action was taken on by the followers of Christ as the 'mystery of faith', but as a mystery that of its essence implied worship, something to be done in memory of the death on Calvary and in honour of the Father; and so they went from house to house breaking bread from that moment. But it was a thousand years before the successors of the apostles formulated the article of the Creed which expressed the precise nature of their action. And indeed up to the present day the Church seeks to formulate more clearly in what that simple action of worship precisely consists. At the Last Supper, however, the apostles possessed the real mystery; they took and ate and their faith was confirmed. And when the Church affirms that the

apostles, being so close to the mystery of the Incarnation, had an explicit faith in the whole body of Christian truth as it was later to appear, this is surely not to be understood in terms of a kind of formulation of the pages of Denzinger in their minds' eye, but rather in their accepting the Mystery of the Real Presence in its totality and living it in worship and in preaching, i.e., in action towards God and towards man.

To sum up, the Presence of God is the Mystery which lies at the heart of every religion and therefore of every form of worship. The recognition of this mystery calls forth incipient faith, which without revelation is formulated in a thousand and one strange systems of gods and spirits, but which is expressed in action in rites and ceremonies, also diverse in the extreme, but which express the same unformulated faith in the creaturely dependence on God and the necessity to recognise this dependence. When at length faith becomes a supernatural act informed by the revelation of this presence, the same relationship exists between this true faith and the worship that springs from it. The fact of the revealed mystery is accepted by the true believer, and this acceptance demands first of all the action of worship which is also the full confession of faith; and as faith is thus fulfilled in public prayer, so is it perfected in its wholeness and sorted out into its parts. *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi.*

The next issue of the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT which will be

THE OCTOBER NUMBER

will include the following contributions

<i>The Lay Apostolate</i>	Pope Pius XII's address to the World Congress of Lay Apostles
<i>The King & the Kingdom</i>	Roland Potter
<i>Obedience</i>	Oswin Magrath
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THE MYSTERY OF THE SCRIPTURES

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

We speak of the wisdom of God embodied in a mystery, that hidden wisdom which God devised before the ages unto our glory.—I Cor. 2, 7.

CHRISTIANITY comes to us with the claim to be the revelation of a mystery. Our Lord in the gospel speaks of the 'mystery of the Kingdom of God': and declares that this has been made known to his disciples (Mark 4, 11). St Paul speaks of the gospel as a 'revelation of the mystery, which in ages past was kept secret, but now has been made manifest and through the writings of the prophets has by the command of the everlasting God been made known to all the nations' (Rom. 1, 4). Elsewhere he speaks of 'the mystery which has been hidden from former ages and generations, but now has been made manifest' (Col. 1, 26): and again of 'publishing to the world the plan of the mystery, which had been kept hidden from the beginning of time in the all-creating mind of God' (Eph. 3, 6). What, then, are we to understand by this mystery, and in what does its revelation consist?

We must understand in the first place that it is a mystery in the proper sense of the word; that is to say, it is something that in its very nature is beyond our comprehension. The whole universe is in a sense a mystery, and we ourselves are a mystery to ourselves. No human mind can penetrate to the inmost essence of any created thing, much less into the depth of any human soul. However much our knowledge of nature increases, we still must remain ignorant of its final purpose and of the ultimate destiny of man. However far the human mind may go towards the knowledge of absolute Being, it still has to confess that Being itself is unknowable and that the highest wisdom is to acknowledge our ignorance. Only if the Absolute were to reveal itself, if the Mystery were to make itself known, could we have any certain knowledge of it. But here again we are confronted with a problem. If Being itself, the absolute Reality, totally transcends our comprehension, we can never know it as it is.

If, then, the mystery of Being is to be made known to us, two

things are necessary. The first is that it should be made known in terms that are comprehensible to us; the second is that our minds should be raised to understand the meaning that is hidden beneath these terms. Now this is what we find in the revelation of Christianity. The divine mystery is made known to us by means of a series of symbols. Our Lord himself spoke of it as the 'kingdom of God', and he habitually made use of Parables in order to expound it. Now the 'kingdom of God' is a symbol derived from the Old Testament, and it is linked with a whole group of symbols by which the mystery is gradually unfolded throughout the Old Testament. Thus at the birth of Christ we are told that 'he shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1, 32). We have here a series of symbols, the 'throne of David', the 'house of Jacob', the 'kingdom' and the 'Son of the Most High', all of which can be traced back to their origin in the Old Testament, and which cannot be understood apart from this. But the meaning of these symbols does not lie on the surface. In order to understand them we need a special insight. It was this insight which our Lord communicated to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, when, we are told, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he began to interpret the words used of himself in all the scriptures' (Luke 24, 27). It was this understanding of the Scriptures which was communicated to all the Apostles at Pentecost, and which comes down to us with the tradition of the Church. Thus St Paul, after describing the 'mystery' as something altogether transcending the human understanding, 'What eye has not seen, what ear has not heard, what has not entered into the heart of man, all these things has God prepared for those who love him' (1 Cor. 2, 9), then goes on to say that these things God has made known to us through the Spirit. It is the communication of the Spirit, of God's own wisdom to us, which alone can enable us to penetrate the meaning of the Scriptures and to understand the mystery which is revealed in them.

The symbolism of the Scriptures is, therefore, of a special character, but the lines of its interpretation are laid down for us in the Scriptures themselves. Already in the Old Testament, as Père Daniélou has pointed out in his great work on this subject,

Sacramentum Futuri, the Prophets begin to regard the events of the past as types or figures of events to come; and in the New Testament the whole history of Israel in the past comes to be interpreted in the light of the mystery which has been revealed in Christ. The classical example of this is to be found in St Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians where, after recalling the events of the Exodus, he says: 'When all this happened to them, it was a symbol; the record of it was written as a warning to us, in whom history has reached its fulfilment' (1 Cor. 10, 11). In this phrase 'history has reached its fulfilment' we touch the heart of this mystery. The symbolism of the Scriptures is essentially an historical symbolism. This is what differentiates it from all other symbolism. St Thomas in the first question of the *Summa Theologica* asks 'Whether sacred scripture should make use of metaphors', and he replies that it is natural for man to come to the knowledge of spiritual things through material things, because all our knowledge begins with the senses. It is right therefore, he concludes, that in sacred scripture spiritual things should be communicated to us by means of metaphors taken from the material world (I, i, 9). He then goes on to remark that it belongs to God who is the author of sacred scripture to use not only words as signs of things, as men ordinarily do, but to make the things themselves signify something else (I, i, 10). Thus it comes about that the actual events of the Old Testament are signs of events which were to come. The symbols of the Scriptures therefore are not merely signs; they have their roots in history.

This historical character of Christianity is a scandal to Mr Aldous Huxley, and to other exponents of the *Philosophia Perennis*. For them the sacred mystery is essentially independent of history, because it is altogether beyond time. For them 'liberation' consists in an escape from the world of time in the realisation of the timeless state of absolute Being. This is, in fact, the doctrine which underlies the Perennial Philosophy in all its forms. Neither the Indian, the Chinese, nor the Greek philosopher had any philosophy of history. For the Indian, as for the Greek, time is an endless cycle of change; to escape from the cycle by realising his true and eternal nature is man's only hope. But though it offers a high ideal for the few, this still leaves the mass of mankind in its misery, and gives no meaning to history. But the Christian religion is essentially historical; it finds its expression not in a philosophy

but in a history. For the mystery of Christianity is the revelation of the transformation of history, the passage of time into eternity. It is a revelation of the meaning of history. This is why St Paul in the passage we have quoted says that in us 'history has reached its fulfilment'. So our Lord began his preaching with the words 'the time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand' (Mark 1, 15). 'The kingdom of God' comes at the crisis of human history: it is itself the fulfilment of all history. So St Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians writes: 'It was his loving design, centred in Christ, to give history its fulfilment by resuming everything in him' (Eph. 1, 10). With these words St Paul reveals the full extent of the mystery; it is not only all men but all things that have been 'resumed' in Christ. It is the fulfilment not only of the history of mankind but of the universe. The revelation is concerned with the destiny of the whole material universe, of this world of space and time. This is the mystery 'hidden in God from the foundation of the world' which St Paul declares that he has been commissioned to reveal: it is this that we have to understand if we are to fathom the mystery of the Scriptures.

We have, therefore, to consider the sacred scriptures as the revelation of a mystery in symbolic terms. The mystery itself is beyond our comprehension, for it is the mystery of God himself, but it is God revealing and communicating himself to man. In primitive religion the sacred mystery was revealed in the form of a myth, that is a symbolic story representing the action of God in nature and in human life, and mankind endeavoured to enter into communion with the mystery by means of ritual and sacrifice. In the *Philosophia Perennis*, the natural religion of mankind, the mystery was recognised as an infinite and eternal order of Being, absolutely transcending this world of space and time, and yet reflected in the whole course of nature and of human history. But now the sacred mystery reveals itself by its action in history; it intervenes in the course of human affairs. History itself is given a new direction and its true meaning is revealed. It is seen no longer merely as the reflection of the eternal order, but as itself undergoing a transformation. Time and space and the whole material universe are shown to be involved in a movement which is bearing them forward into eternal life. The sacred mystery is revealed, therefore, not in a myth but in a history, not in a philosophy of Being but in an Act. The Old Testament is therefore a

symbolic history, the story of a divine intervention in history, of the Act by which history itself is being transformed. While the story of the Old Testament is thus literally and historically true, it is at the same time symbolic of man's eternal destiny. The events of the Old Testament are not merely historical events: they are 'signs' of events which infinitely transcend them. The meaning of these events is only gradually revealed, but as it is unfolded it is seen to lie beyond the sphere of history altogether. It lies in the sphere of the divine reality itself. At the same time these symbols do not only reveal the meaning of the mystery, they communicate it to us. We have ourselves to pass through the events which they signify in order that we may participate in them and experience their reality.

We can see this most clearly if we consider the symbol by which our Lord himself chose to reveal the mystery, that of the 'kingdom of Heaven'. The origin of this symbol is to be found in the promise which was made to David: 'When thy days are fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his Kingdom. He shall build a house to my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever.' (2 Kings 7, 13-14.) We have here the prophecy whose fulfilment was heralded at the birth of Christ; the source of the 'house' and the 'throne' and the 'kingdom' and the title of 'son' are clearly revealed. But in the Old Testament these terms were understood in a material sense; even the prophets never get wholly beyond it. But when we come to the New Testament a profound change takes place. We see all these terms transferred on to another plane. The kingdom of God is declared to be 'not of this world'; the sonship of Christ is shown to belong to another order of being altogether from that of David. And yet, and this is something which we must never lose sight of, while the order of history is thus totally transcended, yet the continuity is preserved. The kingdom of heaven, while in its essential nature it is beyond time and history, is at the same time the fulfilment of history. Thus the very first words of our Lord's public preaching were, 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand'. We have here the same idea of the 'fulfilment of history' as we

found in St Paul. The kingdom of God comes at the 'crisis' of human history; it is the event to which everything else has been leading. But at the same time it is a 'mystery', for though it has its beginning in time, its fulfilment is not in time but in eternity. That is why it always appears so mysterious. In one sense it can be said to have already come, while in another sense we are taught to pray, 'Thy kingdom come'.

Perhaps the word which best describes the mystery of the kingdom is its 'imminence'; in the words of the gospel it is always 'at hand'. It marks the 'presence' of the eternal order in time, of the real order beneath the flux of phenomena. In the words of Mr T. S. Eliot, it is the 'point of intersection of the timeless with time', the 'now' of eternity breaking in upon the world of 'becoming'. And yet, though the kingdom of heaven is ever present, there is nevertheless a point at which we can say in a definite sense that it 'came'. There is a note of urgency throughout the gospels, the expectation of an event which is about to take place. Our Lord declared to his disciples, 'Believe me, there are those standing here who will not taste of death before they have seen the kingdom of God' (Luke 9, 27); and as the hour of his passion draws near this sense of the imminence of the kingdom seems to grow stronger, until at the Last Supper he declares, 'I tell you, I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine again till the kingdom of God has come.' (Luke 22, 18.) Finally, at the hour of his death, in reply to the touching words of the thief, 'Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom', he replies, 'I promise thee *this day* thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' (Luke 23, 43.) The word 'Paradise' introduces one of those symbols of the 'mystery' which need to be studied at length, but here it is sufficient to remark on the significance of the words 'this day'. Here we reach the point at which we can say that the kingdom of God has in a final and definitive sense 'come'. There can in fact be no doubt that the event to which the whole of the gospel has been moving, the consummation in which 'history reaches its fulfilment', is the Resurrection. It is the moment at which Christ passed through death into life; when the barrier of the phenomenal world was broken and the day of eternity dawned. We cannot exaggerate the importance of this event in the history of the world or its significance in the scheme of Christianity. It is the moment at which our human nature passed beyond this world of space and

time, and death the supreme obstacle was finally overcome.

There can be no doubt that in the mind of St Paul and of the early Church the Resurrection marks the supreme revelation of the mystery. In the Epistle to the Romans he speaks of it as an 'act of power' by which Christ was 'marked out as Son of God by resurrection from death' (Rom. 1, 4); and in the Epistle to the Ephesians he refers to 'that mighty exercise of power which he showed when he raised Christ from the dead and bade him sit at his right hand above the heavens' (Eph. 1, 20). This reference to the 'right hand' of God is based on the symbolism of the Psalms and signifies precisely that Christ has passed beyond this world, 'above the heavens', and has entered into the divine or eternal order. We find the same expression in the Acts of the Apostles, when St Peter says that 'God has raised this man Jesus from the dead; we are all witnesses of it; and now exalted at God's right hand he has claimed from his Father the promise to bestow the Spirit' (Acts 2, 33). It is to be noticed how the emphasis here is on the human nature of Jesus, which has been raised from the dead, because this event marks the ascent of our human nature beyond time and space. This brings us to the last element in the revelation of the mystery. Christ has passed into the eternal order of being not for himself but for us. In him and through him our human nature has entered into a new mode of being and it is the very purpose of his resurrection to communicate this new mode of being to us. This is what is signified by the sending of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost a new order of being was manifested on earth. The sacred mystery which had been manifested in the person of Christ was now to be manifested in his 'Church'. The gift of divine life which he had won for mankind was now communicated to his disciples: now in a new but definite sense it could be said that the 'kingdom of God had come'. Thus the first 'coming' was in the person of Christ culminating in the moment of his resurrection. The second 'coming' was to his Church on the day of Pentecost. But there still remains a third 'coming', which St Peter refers to in the Acts of the Apostles as the 'time of the restoration of all things'.

This is the final phase of the mystery, which is revealed by St Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians, when he says that he has made known to us the 'mystery of his will', 'in the dispensation of the fullness of times', or as Mgr Knox translates it, 'to give

history its fulfilment', by 'resuming' or more literally 'by bringing all things to a head in Christ' (Eph. I, 9-10). We have here the same idea of the fullness of times' or the 'fulfilment of history' as we found in the gospel. The event which was to fulfil all history took place in a certain sense at the Resurrection of Christ, and in another sense on the day of Pentecost; but its final phase has to wait till the end of the world. For it is only then that the whole of this order of space and time will pass over into that new order of being into which Christ entered at the Resurrection. It is not only all men but 'all things' that have been 'resumed' or 'brought to a head' in Christ. He is the 'head' not only of mankind but also of the universe. The whole of that movement of time which was set in motion at the creation of the world is 'resumed' in him. With this event the phenomenal world passes into the world of absolute Reality, the world of 'becoming' into the world of Being, the material into the spiritual, the human into the divine. This is the ultimate 'mystery' of Christianity, the 'coming' of the Kingdom of God. This is the mystery which is revealed in all the Scriptures, and which we have to grasp, if we are to penetrate their meaning. It is revealed, as we have seen, in certain symbolic forms, like the Kingdom of God itself, which have their roots in the Old Testament and which are only gradually unveiled. We have therefore to endeavour to trace the gradual unfolding of these symbols through the Old Testament and see how they receive their final significance in the New. But these symbols are not only the means by which the mystery is revealed; they are also the means by which we ourselves are enabled to participate in the mystery. Thus it comes about that the Old Testament is symbolically the history of every man.

It represents the history of mankind in its journey through this world towards the Land of Promise or the City of God. We have each of us to pass through the Red Sea and under the 'Cloud'; we have each to share in the Exodus and become partakers in the Law and the Covenant; we have each to enter into the Kingdom, to take our place at the marriage of the King and to stand to worship in the Temple of the 'living God'. Now the sphere in which all these mysteries are carried out is the Church, and the means by which we are initiated into them are the Sacraments. For the Sacraments are, in the words of Père Daniélou, 'the continuation in the present time of the great works of God in the

Old and the New Testament and the prefiguration of their accomplishment in the world to come'. We have therefore to establish a connection between the different phases of the history of the Old Testament and the phases of the Christian life which are represented by the Sacraments of the Church. There are therefore no less than four 'meanings' to be unfolded in the Old Testament. There is first of all the literal and historical meaning, which forms the basis of all, for we must never forget that divine revelation is a history. It is concerned above all with the transformation of the historical order, of this world of space and time, and of our individual human lives. But secondly the Old Testament represents the 'sacramental' order of this world in which we live, the journey of every Christian through the sacraments of the present life, the stages of his ascent to God. Thirdly, it represents the mystery of Christ, the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the Kingdom of God, in which all the events of the Old Testament find their temporal and historical fulfilment. Finally, it represents the 'new creation', that new order of Being to which the whole of the present order of space and time is moving, which is the fulfilment of the work of Christ and the consummation of the history of the world.

THE TRINITY AND MAN'S NEED¹

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THE first and last of man's needs is his need of *another person*. Man and woman, child and mother, the simple fact of friendship—we are made that way; we are made for other persons. We are made for a life that is meant to be shared. It is not good for man to be alone.

And the pain of loneliness is more than an ache in your hand: something that hurts, but it will pass, it is not all of you. Loneliness is a hurt in the centre of your self: you are *alone*, and you long for another to share your need.

Man is made for another: but in the end that other is *God*. All love asks to be shared (that is what love means: a sharing, a giving-and-taking). And a selfish love is no love at all. So it is that God (who is love) supremely asks to be shared. And that indeed is why the whole world was made, and above all why man was made. For man has a *mind*—he can find out for himself: he has a *will*—he can choose for himself: he has a *heart*—he can love the person he knows and has *chosen* to love. And all this he does freely: and the freest thing he ever does is to know God, to choose God and at last to love him.

That is why no loneliness is so terrible as that loneliness which is the lack of God, for there is nothing that so separates us from the life and the happiness that are meant to be ours. And that is what sin is: the loss of God, the chosen rejection not simply of God but of a man's true self. Man is made for another, and that other is God. And yet when he sins he chooses to say, 'I can do without you', 'I will not serve', 'I refuse to love'. The misery of separation from God is not just a matter of a law that is broken;

¹ This is the (modified) script of a service for Trinity Sunday, broadcast on the Home Service of the B.B.C. on 8 June, 1952. It should be explained that the intention was to attempt to answer the question: 'What can the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity mean to me?', a question imagined to be asked not by Catholics, not even by non-Catholic Christians, but by the millions who have never heard of the distinctions the theologians need to make. The script is therefore printed here as being no sort of a contribution to theology, but rather as an essay in presenting doctrine in terms of man's needs and their true fulfilment in the life of grace.

it is far deeper, for 'without me you can do nothing' says our Lord; yes, you can do NO THING that matters or will bring you happiness in the end. The pain of *this* loneliness is the pain of a life that has lost the colour and shape that give it meaning and joy. In seeking God we seek our own fulfilment as well: in rejecting God we reject ourselves as well.

And what is God's answer to man's need? That is the theme of what we want to say this evening. Man is separated from God: that is what his sin has done. God sends his Son into the world to bring that world back to God. God becomes man that man might return to him. That is what the Gospels are about. God, my Father, has sent me into the world, says our Lord, so that I may lead you back to him, to whom you belong, for whom you are made. And the Father and I are going to send a Holy Spirit who will go on teaching you the truth, who will go on filling your minds and hearts so that even now you may share in God's own life. In other words, God's answer to man's need is to reveal, to make known, his very self—the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: three, who most mysteriously are yet one God, almighty, everlasting.

And this we could never have discovered for ourselves. This truth about God's own inmost life is beyond our human understanding, the day-by-day business of dealing with what our minds can manage on their own. But God has spoken, and God is true: if there be a God at all, he can never deceive or be deceived. And God has made this known to us through his Son, God made man for us. At the very beginning of our Lord's ministry on earth he declares it, when Father, Son and Holy Spirit are met in the mystery of his baptism in the river Jordan.

Then Jesus came from Galilee and stood before John at the Jordan, to be baptised by him. John would have restrained him; It is I, he said, that ought to be baptised by thee, and dost thou come to me instead? But Jesus answered, Let it be so for the present; it is well that we should thus fulfil all due observance. Then John gave way to him. So Jesus was baptised, and as he came straight up out of the water, suddenly heaven was opened, and he saw the spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting upon him. And with that, a voice came from heaven, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—St Matthew 3, 13-17.

And at the very end of his work on earth our Lord confirms this truth, when he sends out his apostles in the name of the Trinity to continue his work as long as time shall last.

And now the eleven disciples took their journey into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had bidden them meet him. When they saw him there, they fell down to worship; though some were still doubtful. But Jesus came near and spoke to them; All authority in heaven and on earth, he said, has been given to me; you, therefore, must go out, making disciples of all nations, and baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all the commandments which I have given to you. And behold I am with you all through the days that are coming, until the consummation of the world.—St Matthew 18, 16-20.

And the first thing that we can do, the first thing we have to do, is to praise God. If all this is true, then we are RE-created now, made new, made able to share in the very life of God. Loneliness is over, for man returns to God.

Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided Unity. Let us give thanks to him for he has had mercy upon us.

Thou, eternal Trinity, art my creator and I am the work of thy hands, and I know through the new creation which thou hast given me in the blood of thy Son which was shed for me that thou art in love with thy workmanship. O eternal Trinity, thou art a deep sea, into which the deeper I enter the more I find, and the more I find the more I seek. Grant that I may see thee with the light that thou alone canst give.—

From the Dialogue of St Catherine of Siena.

*To thee honour and dominion,
To thee glory and power,
To thee praise and thanksgiving unto endless ages O God.
All thy creatures praise thee, adore thee, glorify thee,
O blessed Trinity.
From whom are all things,
By whom are all things,
In whom are all things,
To whom be glory for ever.
Praise be to thee, O blessed Trinity!*

Let my soul bless thee, Lord God, my creator, let my soul bless thee, Lord God.

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

Almighty, everliving God, look mercifully upon our weakness, and stretch forth the right hand of thy majesty to protect us: through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God: and the Word was God . . . (et seq.)—St John 1, 1-14.

Lord God who didst appoint thy only-begotten Son to be the saviour of mankind, and didst command that he should be called Jesus, grant us this grace, that we may enjoy in heaven the vision of him whose holy name we venerate on earth: through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father: and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever: The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him. But you shall know him; because he shall abide with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you.—St John 14, 15-18.

God, who didst teach the faithful by sending the light of the Holy Spirit into their hearts, grant that by the gift of that Spirit right judgement may be ours and that we may ever find joy in his comfort: through Christ our Lord.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

In one sense that is all we can say of God: we praise him. And we praise him for what he is: he has told us, and his word is true. Of course the doctrine of the Trinity is infinitely mysterious: though not in the usual modern sense of something that *has* no solution. Rather it is an exact account of what God is like, and for that reason it is far beyond our limited human grasp. But that doesn't mean that the doctrine is just an affair for theologians. As far as we are concerned the doctrine of the Trinity is the great and central truth about God. For that reason alone we praise him for what he is: but in the light of it we see the central truth about ourselves: for we were created by God; we were re-created, made new, through his Son who became man for that very reason; and

the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and the Son, is sent by them to teach us, to comfort us, to re-create us every day.

For Christianity doesn't mean just saying 'Yes' to a series of extraordinary ideas: it means saying 'Yes' to God, who made us for himself and wants us now to be happy with him for ever. And happiness means sharing a life: we know that in our daily business of living. And the final happiness means sharing the life of God. 'I am come' says our Lord 'that they have *life*, and have it more abundantly.' He tells us that he is the way, the truth and the life. And notice the order of things: he shows the *way* we are to follow. 'Follow me' he says quite simply to his disciples. He declares the *truth* we are to believe. 'Learn of me' he says. 'The words which thou gavest me I have given to them.' And all this that we may have life: the very life of God, made possible for us because the Son of God has taken our human nature and all its needs, has shared our manhood that we might share in the life of God that is his. For the Christian faith is not an idea, it is a fact; it is not good advice, it is good news; it is not a philosophy, but a life and all of a life—the life of God, the life of the Blessed Trinity, communicated to us, given to us to share.

That is why the truth about the Trinity matters so much. We began with man's loneliness, and we come to see that God's absolute lack of loneliness is the supreme truth about God—that eternal giving and taking within the single unity of God: *there* is the ultimate communication of one with another—nothing to separate, nothing to divide. To share in that mystery, to have part in that life, is the final purpose of the Christian life, man's fulfilment. Here is a truth that gives a new meaning to all our pain and misery and frustration. They would be intolerable if they were the whole of the story: if life meant only the separated life of our own selves. Even in the midst of the deepest agony and fear, the centre of ourselves can remain fixed and at rest, fixed on God, and at rest in his friendship. In the middle of a whirlpool you can see a point that is utterly still: there a leaf or a twig will stay suspended, while all around is the tumult of the turning waters. So it is with the man who is at rest in God, who shares in his life: he knows where his true home lies, and all else—the things that seem to matter most for the noise and distress they cause—all else matters not at all in the end.

For us, life means change and growth: we are creatures made

to grow; made to die, too, for that is the one certain event that awaits us all. But in God there can be no change, but yet he is life itself: life that is ever active, but ever at rest: the perfection of life. But how can we hope to have part in a life that is so far beyond our imagining? Our very restlessness, our very sense of our own futility, mean, to begin with, that rest and fulfilment can only be found in another. And that other—such is the Christian faith—is God who first made us, who has had pity on us even though we have rejected him, who has become a man for us and has in our very manhood broken down that wall of partition which has separated us from God. The way back to God, the way home for us all, has been opened for us by Christ our Lord. He showed us the depth of his love by dying for us—and that is the furthest point of love, to give your life for the one you love. And so it is that at the moment of his dying, life begins for us because grace begins, that free gift of God's obtained for us by Christ our Brother on the Cross, which even now makes it possible for us to hope for heaven. Indeed heaven begins for us, eternal life begins for us: we are born again, as our Lord says, no longer of the flesh but of the spirit. Baptised in the name of the Trinity and with the sign of the Cross, we share in all that our Lord achieved for us: we are made capable of sharing in the life of God.

We can even be called the 'Sons of God'. St Paul insists that 'those who follow the leading of God's spirit are all God's sons; the spirit you have received is not, as of old, a spirit of slavery, to govern you by fear; it is the spirit of adoption, which makes us cry out, Abba, Father. The spirit thus assures our spirit, that we are children of God; and if we are his children, then we are heirs too; heirs of God; sharing the inheritance of Christ.' And this adoption is not a mere legal claim; it is a free sharing now in the infinite life and love of God, for, says St John, 'as many as received him he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name'.

For we are not simply meant to have ideas about God. Even the human reason on its own can have ideas about God: but God loves us, he wants us to love him in return. He wants us to possess him, to hold him for our own. He can go so far as to speak of us as his own dwelling, for, says our Lord, 'if a man has any love for me he will be true to my word; and then he will win my Father's love, and we will both come to him and make our con-

tinual abode with him'. And so it is that the Blessed Trinity, most ultimate and tremendous of mysteries, is closer than breathing or touching: God dwells in the soul he has made for himself, in man whom he has re-created that he might come home to God.

Let us pray: *Almighty, ever-living God, who has permitted us thy servants, in our profession of the true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of that majesty to adore the Unity, grant, that by steadfastness in this same faith, we may be ever guarded against all adversity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

All this presupposes Faith: believing in God, because he is the very Truth, trusting in God because his promises cannot fail. At the very beginning of our Christian life this is told us in the sacrament of Baptism, which, as it is administered in the Catholic Church, begins with two simple answers. 'What do you ask of the Church of God?' 'Faith.' 'And what does Faith offer you?' 'Everlasting life.' Here is the whole story: the beginning and the end of it all. 'Faith': the gift of God that enables us to know without the shadow of a doubt (there may be difficulties, but no doubts) that he is what he has said he is. 'Everlasting life': the final purpose of our whole human life: God's own life given us to share even here—and now.

That is why we need to pray for faith. 'Ask and you shall receive.' We need to pray for faith, even though in God's mercy we may already possess it: to pray that it may grow, that it may become, as our Lord said it should, a fountain of water springing up within us to life everlasting, the central source of all we are and all we hope to be. And if we have no faith, or think we have no faith, and yet long for it: that is something to be grateful for, that is a beginning. Our very misery, even despair itself, the sense we have of man's own insufficiency and the tragedy that comes upon him if he trusts simply in his own strength (and we have plenty of reminders of that particular tragedy in our own time): all that can lead us to see that the answer to our needs is not within ourselves: our loneliness looks for another. 'Lord I believe: help thou mine unbelief.' It is a prayer that all of us need to say, and we can, if we will, begin this moment—not tomorrow but now—to ask that the seed of faith may spring to life in us, so that we may hope at last for life everlasting, God's life for our sharing.

And here is a wonderful thing. It is the Catholic belief that

God has given us more than a vague hope that some day, somehow, our faith in him will have its reward. All that happened when our Lord brought us out of the slavery of sin and separation—all that happens still, through the Church whose whole purpose is to go on doing the work of Christ our Lord, teaching us, leading us, healing us, reconciling us to God, and through the sacraments uniting us to him even in this life. Our faith in the Church is a faith in God, in God's promises which are true. God has called us to share in his life: that is wonderful enough. But still more wonderful he has given us the very means to make that possible. It is as though he has shown us the end to which our journey leads, and has put us on the road to it, and finally has walked with us on the way, leading us, supporting us, for 'I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world'. All that he asks is that we should trust him, should believe that this is so. 'Lord I believe', but I am easily turned aside, there are so many other things that so easily attract me: 'Lord I believe', so 'help thou mine UNbelief'. Go on saying *that*. And day by day our life is surrounded by countless marks of God's mercy: the prayer, which may seem only half a prayer, a stammer that I force out when I suddenly realise how much I need the help of another, how much I need God, that prayer is God's gift. It is something to thank him for. And being a Christian means realising in the daily business of working and eating and just being that all the time we can be seeking God, if we want to: or we can turn from him, if we want to. It is what we *want* to do that matters, and nowadays so many of us just 'want' and we scarcely think of what we really want, or *whom* we want—God.

And so we sing in praise of God's gift of himself in the one sacrament we call blessed: that pledge of his love for us, the memorial of his dying for us when he offered his Body and Blood on the Cross for us, *the* mystery of Faith which assures us that indeed he is with us all days, here below through the certainty of Faith, and one day, please God, face to face in the final end to our loneliness in heaven. 'Bone Pastor': may he feed us, may he lead us, may the good shepherd at last bring his sheep into the fold.

[The *Te Deum*]

An Act of Faith: *My God I believe in thee and all thy holy Church teaches us because thou hast said it and thy word is true.*

Let us pray: *O Lord Jesus Christ who hast said, Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you: grant, we beseech thee, to us who ask the gift of thy divine love, that we may love thee with all our heart, word and deed, and may never cease to praise thee.*

Benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, descendat super vos et maneat semper. Amen.



THE MOTHERHOOD OF GOD

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

THE FATHERHOOD of God is an idea that is far from exhaustive of God's nature. Alone it would isolate God from a vast part of our own nature.' So wrote Dom Vonier, O.S.B. (in *The Divine Motherhood*, p. 90), and what he does not go on to say in so many words, though the idea is implicit in his book, is voiced by Fr Victor White, O.P., in his article on 'The Scandal of the Assumption' (LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Nov.-Dec. 1950), when he says: 'Perhaps it [the definition of the Assumption] will lead the Church to closer consideration and ultimate formulation of the deep mystery of the "Motherhood of God". For by the Assumption Mary returns to her own eternal Source, and not she but God himself is the ultimate and eternal type of Motherhood, Womanhood, and even materiality.' In what follows there will be suggested, with much diffidence, one possible line of approach to a deeper understanding of this mystery.

To the idea of the Motherhood of God which, though not new, seems to be attracting greater interest in our day, two major objections have been raised: that it is untraditional and that it detracts from the honour and importance due to our blessed Lady whose divine motherhood, it is claimed, as it were supplements and counterbalances the Fatherhood of God. That the idea, though unfamiliar, is not untraditional will be shown in the course of this article, and the lie is already given to the second objection by the quotation above.

It is precisely in and through Mary that we shall come to understand something of this most sweet and gracious aspect of God's mystery; she is the Beatrice who will lead us whither we may catch a glimpse of the face of a Mother in the heart of the Godhead. For as St Grignon de Montfort says (*True Devotion*, III, 7, 4), 'Mary is altogether relative to God: and, indeed, I might well call her the relation to God. She only exists in reference to God. She is the echo of God, who says nothing, repeats nothing, but God.' This is little more than a paraphrase of Wisdom, 7, 26, which the Church applies to Mary: 'She is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the

image of his goodness'. In other words, Mary reflects God, she is a sign which points to him and more than a mere sign; a 'sacrament' which represents and communicates him in a manner unparalleled save by her Son who is God himself incarnate. She is most like God, has the greatest 'affinity' to God of any creature, and we can also say with all reverence that God is most like her. Not only the sacred humanity of Jesus which he received from her alone, but the very Godhead has in her its most perfect created image and reflection. 'Thy very face and form, dear Mother, speak to us of the Eternal!' (Newman.) But Mary is, as it were, Womanhood perfected and Motherhood personified.¹ 'God could make a greater world but he cannot make a more perfect Mother than the Mother of God.' (St Bonaventure, *Speculum*, c. 8.) From the Book of Genesis to the Apocalypse she appears repeatedly throughout the Bible as the Woman who is the Sign, a Woman who is a Mother while remaining a Virgin. And we who are blessed with the fullness of the revelation of that which is signified, know that she is the Mother of God as well as of man. 'The divine Motherhood', says Vonier (op. cit. p. 5), 'is the primary and central fact of Mary's election and predestination on the part of God. She is not a saint on whom the divine Motherhood was bestowed as an extra grace: she is the divine Mother to whom sanctity has been granted as the necessary spiritual complement . . .'² 'In the sweetness of the divine Motherhood there is revealed to us something that is not contained in the idea of the divine Fatherhood.' (ibid. p. 90.) 'If Christian theology has its smile, the divine Motherhood is that smile. Outside the clear vision of God nothing can reveal so vividly as does the divine Motherhood that side of God to the contemplation of which the Psalmist invites us when he says: "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. 33, 9).' (ibid. p. 84.)

Looking beyond Mary, therefore, we seek in God the 'ultimate and eternal prototype' of that Motherhood which was the *raison d'être* of her predestination and sanctification. And we seek, too, for an assurance that the Mother's love which she lavished on her Creator whom she brought forth, is creation's fullest and most perfect echo of the tenderness which God has for each of the

1 St John in his Gospel never speaks of her by her name but always as 'The Mother of Jesus'.

2 See also Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, passim but especially c. 1: 'The Divine Maternity: Its Eminent Dignity'.

creatures who are born of his love. That is to say: Is God in any sense 'Mother' in himself and is he 'motherly' towards us? Both reason and revelation would seem to answer 'yes' to either query.

The late Mgr John O'Connor wrote that 'Plato, according to Patmore, says that the supreme being *must* have a bit of motherhood in him'. (Unfortunately he gave no references; can any reader supply them?) '*Nemo tam Mater quam Deus*' is a dictum old enough to be attributed to Tertullian, though apparently falsely. In an early Christian document 'The Odes of Solomon', said to have been used in the composition of the Holy Saturday Office, God is made to say: 'I fashioned their members: My own breasts I prepared for them that they might drink my milk and live thereby.' (viii, 17.) Primitive man seems instinctively to 'feminise' certain aspects of inanimate being, seeing gender behind sex,³ and to deify creation's feminine element in female goddesses, above all in the Mother Goddess. Even when the development of language has eliminated gender, as in our own, we still retain such turns of phrase as 'Mother Nature', 'Mother Earth', 'the womb of time'. In this idea of 'femininity' seems to be envisaged a certain passivity or, better, *receptivity*, and a fecundity which receives its vivifying principle from without. Some identify this with the scholastic concept of *materiality* or *potentiality*, equating the masculine element with *actuality*. And while woman is regarded as the highest embodiment and personification of this feminine, potential element in creation (cf. Patmore), though both are present in either sex, the creature as such is said to be feminine in regards to God. In Mary pronouncing her *Fiat* at the Annunciation and thereby laying herself completely open to the divine action so that the Wisdom of God became incarnate in her as the fruit of her womb, we have the perfect fulfilment of creaturely, womanly and motherly receptivity and its consequent fertility.

It is in virtue of the hypostatic union of the Word of God with human nature, wrought in Mary's womb at the moment of the Incarnation, that creation and womanhood in Mary's person reach as it were to the confines of the divinity and attain their most perfect likeness to God. But to what aspect of the divine life and activity is the resemblance closest? There can be neither male nor female in God, no materiality in the supreme *Spirit*, no potentiality

³ cf. Fr Gerald Vann, O.P., in 'The Bread of Life', p. 46, *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, Aug./Sept., 1951.

in pure *act*. Maybe the inspired writer of Genesis supplies a clue to the answer. 'God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.' (c. 1, 27.) In this succinct account of the origin of the human race the diversity of the sexes seems to be closely connected with the image of God, and the same train of thought is followed by St John Chrysostom when speaking of marriage: 'A great mystery is being celebrated . . . They come together and two make one . . . *when they come together making not a lifeless image nor yet the image of anything on earth but of God himself.*' (On Col. 4, 12. Hom. 12. cf. Claudel, *Lord Teach Us to Pray*, p. 54.) He does not expressly develop the parallel but it is easy to do so without doing violence to his thought. Man and the woman who came forth from his side together form as it were one person, two in one flesh ('each one separately is imperfect for the procreation of children, each one is imperfect for the constitution of this present life', *ibid.* 13), and their common offspring proceeds from both as from a single person. ('He made of one, one: and again, having made these two one, he so maketh one, so that now also man is produced of one.' (*ibid.*)). But here, surely, is an image of the life of the Blessed Trinity itself, where from one Father comes forth the Son, receiving his being from him, and the Holy Spirit, the fruit of their mutual union and love, proceeds from both as from a single principle. In procreation man is nearer to God and co-operates with him more immediately than in any other purely human activity. Small wonder then, if the processions of Life and Love within the Trinity, the Beginning and End of all things, should be strongly mirrored in the life-producing act of human love. Since, therefore, man, the human father, is likened to and called after the Father after whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named (Ephes. 3, 15), it seems equally legitimate to see in the position and function of woman, the mother, an analogy to that of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. ⁴

True, God is not 'Mother' in the human sense of the word, but neither is he 'Father' or anything else as we know it in its finite, created existence. Nor can there be *receptivity* in God who is Pure Act in the same sense as we see it in the active passivity of Mary 'receiving the word of the angel'. Yet to use the mystic's formula

⁴ From another point of view man can be likened to the Word and woman to the Spirit.

for a deep theological principle: 'God is all that is good . . . and the good that everything hath it is he'. (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, c. 8.) Every particle of created being in the measure of its perfection shares in, reflects and communicates some aspect of the infinite goodness of God, its Cause and Source. (cf. St Thomas, *Summa*. I, 47, 1.) And conversely, every aspect of created perfection is found in an infinitely spiritualised and exalted mode—*eminenter*—in the inconceivable perfection of the Divine Being where '*quidquid habet, hoc est*'. Motherhood, therefore, must be in him since it is from him: and we can attribute to him the love of a Mother which is greatest (I-II, 27, 1) as confidently as we do that of a Father, Brother, Master, Bridegroom—especially since he has already done so himself.⁵

Again, every desire of the human soul is ultimately a desire for God who alone can satisfy its needs and yearnings: 'Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee' (St Augustine). Therefore the longing for a mother's love and care which is one of the deepest instincts of the heart of man must, like all the rest, find its fulfilment in God. The eternal rest of the Beatific Vision is fittingly likened to the repose of the child in its mother's arms.⁶ Holy Scripture says of Divine Wisdom: 'In the latter end thou shalt find rest in her' (Ecclus. 6, 29), and Wisdom Incarnate promised that in him we should find rest for our souls (Matth. 11, 29). Patmore, with his 'Woman is the ultimate rest of all things', seems once more to be in line with this train of thought.

Most of the Fathers of the Church who have broached the subject of Motherhood in God seems to have considered this highest and most touching form of human affection as the one best fitted to represent and suggest the infinitely superior 'too great' love which God has for each of his children.⁷ Other spiritual

5 Cf. Deut. 32, 11. Isaias, 46, 3; 49, 15; 66, 9; 12. Matth. 23, 27.

6 e.g. St John of the Cross, *Spir. Cant.*, St. 26, Note: 'This is the very service he now renders the soul, comforting and caressing it as a Mother her child whom she nurtures in her bosom'.

7 E.g. St Jerome, *In Isaiam*, Lib. 18 (in cap. 66, v. 13), PL. 24, 687-688. 'Misericordiam Creatori in creaturas suas, exemplo matrum discimus, quae liberos amore in sinu nutrientes, omnem superant caritatem'. Also *ibid.* Lib. 13 (in cap. 46, v. 3), PL. 24, 468. St Chrysostom, *Ad Stagirium ascetam a daemonio vexatum*, n. 5, PG. 47, 427: *Ibid.* *Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt ob adversitates*, Liber Unus, cap. 6, PL. 52, 488-489: Hom. 60 *ad pop. Ant.* (Fer. ii infra oct. corporis christi).

writers, ancient and modern, have from time to time used the same figure of speech.⁸ But St Augustine does not scruple to go further, and in two passages at least he speaks explicitly of 'the Wisdom of God, our Mother', '*Sapientia Dei, mater nostra*'.⁹ Nor does he consider that such an expression needs any excuse or explanation. Hugh of St Cher, a lesser though still eminent authority, is equally explicit. 'The Lord therefore is not only a mother, but more than a mother. He is a father in creating thee without labour, as the father begets without labour. He is also a mother in redeeming thee with difficulty and labour; for he brought us forth in travail on the cross. Likewise he is a brother by sharing our nature. And even a spouse, making us fruitful with good works. Hence Ecclus. 4, 11: Thou shalt be as an obedient son of the Most High and I will have mercy on thee more than a mother.' (in *Libro Isaiae*, c. 49, 15.)

Thus Julian of Norwich, whose profound and beautiful chapters on the Motherhood of God (57-63) deserve a separate study, was in safe and distinguished company when in the beholding of the working of the Blessed Trinity she understood three properties—Fatherhood, Motherhood and Lordhood (c. 58), so that 'as verily as God is our Father, so verily is God our Mother'. (c. 59.) Since her revelations deal with God's love for us, she is only concerned with the manifestations of his Motherhood *ad extra*, and these, like St Augustine, she ascribes to the Second Divine Person 'the deep Wisdom of the Trinity' (c. 58); for, she says, 'all the fair

8 e.g. St Francis de Sales, *The Spiritual Director of Devout and Religious Souls*, c. 34. Dom Pierre-Celestin Lou Tseng-Tsiang, *Ways of Confucius and Christ*, pp. 74-75. St Mechtild (*Select Revelations*, Eng. tr., 1873) has a curious allegory in which she sees Love personified as a 'fair Virgin' who at one time lifts God on high in her arms. Yet the Saint says that 'God is Love and Love is God' (p. 57). Elsewhere our Lord tells her: 'Thou shalt call My Love thy Mother and none other shall be thy mother. And as children suck their mother's breasts, even so shalt thou suck from My Love inward consolation and unutterable health, and My Love shall also feed thee, and clothe thee, and provide for thee in all thy wants, like a mother who provideth for her only daughter.' (p. 127.)

9 *Quaestionum Evangelium* Lib. I, Quaest. 36: *In Johannem Tract.* 108, n. 6: 'Nam et in ipsis quae sumimus alimentis, usque adeo non est lacti contrarius solidus cibus, ut ipse lactescat, quo possit esse aptus infantibus, ad quos per matris vel nutricis provenit carnem: sicut fecit etiam *mater ipsa sapientia*, quae cum sit in excelsis angelorum solidus cibus, dignata est quodammodo lactescere parvulis, cum Verbum caro factum est.'

working and all the sweet natural office of dearworthy Motherhood is appropriate to the Second Person' (c. 59), so that 'This fair and lovely word MOTHER, it is so sweet and so kind in itself that it may not verily be said of none but him: and to her that is very Mother of him and of all'. (c. 60.)

It is true, as St Thomas says (I-II, 23, 2), that 'to produce any effect in creatures is the effect of the whole Trinity, by reason of the oneness of nature', but it is none the less legitimate to appropriate certain effects to one or other of the divine Persons. Therefore, just as we ascribe Fatherhood to the Father, though the whole Trinity adopts men as sons of God (*ibid.*), so it seems quite fitting to appropriate Motherhood to the Second Person. This is in spite of its appropriation to the Father in the Odes of Solomon: 'The Son is the cup and he who was milked is the Father: and the Holy Spirit milked him' (xix, 1); of our Lord's own words to Nicodemus: 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost . . .' (John 3, 5), and of St Catherine's remark in the *Treatise of Divine Providence* (omitted from Thorold's translation of her Dialogue), that 'the Holy Spirit, like a tender Mother, nourishes these men (who have renounced everything) on the breast of his divine charity'.¹⁰

For in the first place, as we have already shown, the relations of the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit seem to be the most obvious exemplar of the position and function of woman, the mother, as regards her husband and child, as well as of the attitude of the creature as such towards God and of its response to his action. The whole economy of the Incarnation, whereby it is 'in Christ Jesus', as members of the Mystical Body of the Word made flesh, that man returns to God and is adopted into the life of the Blessed Trinity, seems to lend support to this suggestion. Again, when Holy Scripture personifies Wisdom in the form of a Woman—and Christ himself endorses this (Matth. 11, 20; Luke 11, 49)—the Church applies the same passages both to our Blessed Lady and to Eternal Wisdom, once more underlining the close affinity between her, the Woman, the Virgin Mother, and the Wisdom of God. (The inevitable paradoxes need not deter us. Christianity is built on them, beginning with the Man-God, and

¹⁰ See also Père Bernadot, O.P., *Le Rôle Maternel du Saint Esprit in Notre Vie Divine*. (Cerf., 1936.)

Mary's part in the hypostatic union makes them inevitable in her case too. Dante's glorious line

Vergine Madre, Figlia del tuo Figlio

has numberless echoes and itself echoes a phrase of St Augustine.)¹¹ Perhaps the fact that the 3rd Antiphon at Lauds for the Circumcision compares Mary's untarnished virginity, i.e. her virginal Motherhood, to the burning bush in which the angel appeared to Moses, and that St Justin Martyr (1st Apology, c. 63) declares that this was a theophany of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, may have some relevance here.

But if there is ample justification for seeking in Divine Wisdom the eternal prototype of all materiality, Womanhood and Motherhood, the appropriation to him of the Motherhood of the whole Trinity in respect of creatures would seem to be equally apt. For it is by the Wisdom of God that all things are conceived and created (cf. *S. Th.* I-II, 93, 1), and as known and loved by God they exist from all eternity '*in Verbo*' as in the womb of God, being born of him when they are brought into actual existence by creation. And the same God 'in whom we live and move and have our being', the same Wisdom which created things, continues to conserve them and to direct them to their proper ends. This is Mother Julian's 'Motherhood in kind', and it would seem to be the inspiration of those writers who describe the spiritual life in terms of being as a child in its mother's arms (St Francis de Sales, loc. cit.) or even in the Mother's womb. (e.g. 'God is Like a Mother', by Père Dehau, O.P., *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, Nov. 1948).¹²

Then, when the Word was made Flesh—Mother Julian says that 'he arrayed and dight himself full ready in our poor flesh, himself to do the service and offices of Motherhood in all things' (c. 60)—he as it were bore us all with him as the members in the Head—'us all having enclosed in him' (ibid. c. 57)—so that Mary his Mother is truly ours too. Thus began the 'Motherhood of Grace' which culminated in his bringing us forth on the Cross like many another Mother who gives birth to her child at the cost of her own life.

¹¹ *De Sancta Virginitate*, c. vi: [Maria] 'et Mater est et Virgo. Et mater quidem spiritu, non capitis nostri, quod est ipse Salvator, ex quo magis illa spiritualiter nata est.'

¹² There is an original turn in the similitude as used by Bl. Marie-Thérèse de Soubiran: 'Our Lord treats me like a loving Mother who lifting her child in her arms, takes away everything so that the little one shall only look at her, only think of her, only love her'.

When Christ used the familiar figure of the woman in labour he applied it to the Apostles' grief at his coming departure, but its relevance to his own case was even more striking. For the dolours of his passion and death were indeed the birth-pangs of his Church, that 'new creature' who, like a Second Eve, came forth from his pierced side and opened heart on the Cross, or like a second Adam rose in and with him from the tomb as from the womb of Mother Earth.¹³ Hugh of St Cher mentions this ghostly travail, the Carthusian mystic, Marguerite d'Oyngt (1310) described it in passionate language,¹⁴ and our own Mother Julian treats of it in an equally beautiful if more restrained passage (c. 60). And while the whole Church is born of Christ on Calvary or rises with him on Easter morn, this 'regeneration' is effected in each individual soul by baptism where 'that water of salvation is at once your grave and your mother'. (St Cyril of Jerusalem, *On the Rites of Baptism*, II, p. 4.)

But a Mother's office is only begun with the birth of her child. Most of Mother Julian's chapters are concerned what with she calls the 'Motherhood of Working or of Mercy' in which she sees all God's dealings with the souls in terms of a mother feeding, tending, healing, teaching, correcting her child. It is most striking to note how far this corresponds to the picture of Wisdom which emerges from the Sapiential books, and how both are verified in the Gospel portrait of our Lord. St Paul says that at the Incarnation 'the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared' (Titus, 3, 4), and we might add 'gentleness, meekness and compassion', all of them typically 'feminine' qualities. Nor should this be surprising from a psychological point of view, since Christ, having no human Father, would presumably 'take after' his Mother in a unique degree. Like Wisdom, he prepares a meal for his children and calls them to his table, feeding them with his own flesh and blood as does a mother with her milk. He teaches, corrects, comforts, heals. He embraces and caresses the little ones, literally fulfilling the lovely prophecy of Isaias (66, 12), 'You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they shall carry you; as one whom a mother caresses, so will I comfort you.' His care for and devotion to his Apostles even at the hour of their betrayal and

¹³ El Greco's *Agony in the Garden* is regarded as portraying Christ in travail with the Apostles, the Church in embryo, sleeping in the womb of time.

¹⁴ Quoted in *Pax*, March 1935, p. 282.

after the Resurrection recalls another passage from the same prophet (49, 15): 'Can a mother forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet shall not I forget.' Yet the simile chosen by our Lord himself was that of the humble mother hen sheltering her brood under her wings and protecting them from all harm: 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wing and thou wouldst not'. (Matth. 23, 27.)¹⁵ Whenever we sing or hear at Compline that lovely versicle: 'Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of thine eye, and protect us under the shadow of thy wings', we have an echo of his words and a ready-made liturgical invocation to God, our eternal Mother.

Another point which could be laboured is the continuation of the allegory and paradox of Motherhood in the Church. Although a city, the Heavenly Jerusalem, she is also the Bride adorned for her husband and like Mary, her prototype, a Mother too. 'That Jerusalem which is our Mother', says St Paul (Gal, 4, 26), while St Augustine describes her as 'She who following his Mother daily brings forth his members and is a virgin still' (*De Fide Spe et Caritate*, 34). 'Holy Mother Church' we call her and are proud to be her children, spiritually born, nurtured, taught, corrected by her. But this Woman, while being like Mary the Bride and Helper of Christ, is also Christ himself, the Body of the Mystic Christ. So once more we are face-to-face with Christ our Mother, still nourishing, protecting, cherishing us all by his all-embracing love. The Wisdom of God conceiving and creating us, Wisdom Incarnate giving us spiritual birth by dying for us, the Mystical Christ nurturing and training us until we have reached the fullness of the age of Christ: and all is one Love, one Wisdom, one Mother, God himself.

15 St Augustine comments (*Quaest. Ev. loc. cit.*): 'Quod dixit Dominus ad Jerusalem, "Quoties volui congregare filios tuos, sicut gallina congregat filios suos sub alas, et noluisti?" Hoc genus animantis magnum affectum in filios habet, ita ut eorum infirmitate affecta et ipsa infirmetur; et quod difficilius in ceteris animantibus invenies, alis suis filios protegens, contra milvum pugnet: sic etiam mater nostra Sapientia Dei, per carnis susceptionem infirmata quodammodo: (unde et Apostolus dicit, quod infirmum est Dei fortius hominibus;) protegit infirmitatem nostram, ut restitit diabolo, ne nos rapiat. In qua defensione, quod adversus milvum conatur affectu, haec adversus diabolum paficit potestate.'

Abbot Vonier has said (op. cit. p. 101) that 'true civilisation is easily tested by its attitude towards motherhood'. If that be so, it is to be feared that our own cuts a sorry figure in such a test. Woman is esteemed for much that is great and valuable, but too often at the cost of that motherhood, physical or spiritual, without which she fails to be her true self or to fulfil her real vocation. Yet woman is the symbol and the mother the human school of that innate wisdom without which all other knowledge leads to folly and all 'progress' ends in destruction. Little use is all our knowledge, 'science' or more often mere information, without wisdom, that instinctive awareness of things in their highest causes which is ultimately a knowledge of God himself, from whom they come, to whom they lead, without whom they would cease to exist. When God came on earth he entrusted himself to the keeping of a woman, a human mother, and the phrase 'they found the child with his mother' is almost a refrain in the early pages of the Gospel. The order of things has not changed, and if the world could but rediscover the secret of true motherhood, it might the more easily rediscover its God who is Wisdom itself, 'the Mother of all good things' (cf. Wisdom, 8, 12). How shall this be done? Surely by finding first Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, the perfection of human motherhood and mirror of the divine. Happily there are signs that she, Queen of earth as well as of heaven and Mother of both God and men, is emerging from her Apocalyptic exile in the desert and claiming once more the love and loyalty of her children. While we acclaim with fresh honours the glories of her triumph in heaven, she makes her presence felt on earth as never before. Fitting it would be, therefore, for her to make better understood here below that mystery of God's life and love which in heaven she penetrates more deeply and reflects more gloriously than all the rest of creation combined.

To end, as we began, with a quotation from Fr Victor White's article: 'This deep mystery of the Motherhood of God . . . leaves traces in the records of many Christian and non-Christian mystics. . . . The fact that Gnostics, Cabbalists, Boehme, the Russian sociologists and others have presented unacceptable formulations of this obscure mystery (may we not have added to their number!) is not to say that it does not exist. It might seem that a clearer consciousness of it will be called for in any new Christian era that awaits our race; and that humanly speaking, a deeper awareness

of it will be necessary if the Gospel is ever to be made intelligible to the cultures of the East and its teeming millions.

As Christ, ascending into heaven, leads the way to God our eternal Father, perhaps Mary, assumed into the same heaven, will lead to deeper knowledge and love of God, our eternal Mother' (loc. cit.).



THE MOTHER OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

TO treat of the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin according to the Scriptures is as overwhelming a task as it would be to treat of Christ according to the Scriptures. For one whole half of the mystery of redemption, as set forth there, is summed up in the person of the Blessed Virgin. Under Christ, and in Christ, the Blessed Virgin plays in the work of the redemption a companion, complementary part to his; being the Eve to his Adam, the Woman answering to the (Son of) Man that he is. It is accepted that it is necessary, in order to appreciate the Scriptural witness to Christ, to study the Bible as a whole and in its full inspired weight of meaning. The same is true of the Blessed Virgin. It is not sufficient, in the Old Testament, to dwell on a number of the more explicitly prophetic texts, nor in the New Testament on the great scenes, say, of the Annunciation, Bethlehem, Cana, Calvary. These texts cannot yield their full significance unless they are seen as organically related to the whole world of meaning which the Scriptures in their entirety embody. Or this might perhaps be expressed by saying that, like Christ himself, the Blessed Virgin is not merely a person but is also a person of Mystery, expressing with all her being something of the supreme Mystery that is the total content of the Scriptures. She cannot, therefore, be understood through anything less than the whole play of that Mystery as set forth in the Bible.

To interpret the Bible in its wholeness of meaning is a task to which only the Church itself is equal. That she *is* equal to it is the measure of her divinely inspired mind. The interpretations of any inspired critic are always liable to seem to the uninspired of us to be arbitrary, or even fantastic! So it is, for example, with the Church's doctrines concerning the Immaculacy of the Blessed Virgin or her Assumption. By those who do not trust the Church they are liable to be dismissed as un-Scriptural. They are not un-Scriptural, but it is true that to any one who cannot discern the Spirit of the Scriptures they will so appear. For that matter, whatever inspired utterance or work of art—human as well as divine—comes to be interpreted, the uninspired critic will always fail

through being unable to penetrate to the inner meaning, to the spirit of it. In the very last analysis it is through the spirit that the letter is flooded with its authentic meaning, and so expresses infinitely more than a purely literal understanding of it can perceive.

The Church's Scriptural interpretation, it need hardly be said, is not to be gathered only from her dogmatic conclusions; it is to be found expressed, for example, in the Liturgy and in the whole body of Catholic Tradition. Any one in touch with those sources who has assimilated anything of their spirit should have begun, even without knowing it, to acquire something of Scriptural understanding; should have begun to be able to read the Bible for himself! For if the Church must unseal the Scriptures for us, this should not mean simply that she dictates their sense to us, but that she gives us all the essential keys to enable us to explore them for ourselves. The Bible is not to be like a divine story that Mother Church reads to her children, seated on her knee, at bedtime; at least, it will be like that to begin with, but sooner or later we should grow up and begin to be capable of exercising our own free understanding and insight. This is not to invoke the principle of private inspiration, in the Protestant sense, but of the need for a Catholic formation and maturity of mind.

The essential keys or principles with which the Church equips us are not provided principally through the authoritative interpretation of any particular texts. What we need far more is to be attuned to the spirit of the Bible, to be introduced to its inner meaning, to the great organic shape of it, to its master themes and images. Although it is certainly true, and indeed impressed upon us by the Church herself, that scientific biblical study is generally speaking an indispensable Catholic instrument, yet it can safely be said that to be versed, for example, in the Liturgy and in all that it sets forth concerning the Blessed Virgin would lead one to an incomparably truer, deeper understanding of the biblical revelation of her than could be gained from the study of any number of scientific commentaries. Sometimes in the Church's handling of the Scriptures what would appear, on a narrow view, to be just a scholarly mistake in biblical interpretation (like the rendering of the Protoevangelium that ascribes to the Woman the crushing of the serpent's head), or to be far-fetched or purely distortions will be discovered on further reflection to be instances of a perfect

understanding of Scripture which even when swerving from immediate literal accuracy yet remains faithful to the deep underlying significance of a text. The Church enjoys that freedom in the handling of the Scriptures which perfect understanding justifies. None of us individually can ever enjoy such freedom as that! Yet we ought to be able to enter into a little more of it than we usually do; and not be content either to be spoon-fed or else to be just assiduous students of the biblical sciences. To attain to a biblical understanding and insight of our own is part of our Catholic inheritance.

This will seem a ponderous way of introducing the few poor remarks that are now to be offered concerning the biblical revelation of the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin. The purpose is to plead that they are not a purely fanciful exercise, but an attempt to read the Scriptures in the light of the Church's reading of them. And the hope will be that nothing will be said that could not be substantiated by the Liturgy or the other sources of Catholic biblical understanding; though it is clearly impossible in this short space to adduce anything of this evidence. It is also impossible to do more than introduce one or two themes belonging to the subject; whereas it would be necessary before one could say that one had generously pondered the revelational data to have studied a score of themes, with all their ramifications and interrelations. One would have needed, for example, to have explored the themes of the Garden, of the Holy Land, of the Temple, of Mother Israel, of the King and his marriage with his people, of Wisdom and the Wisdom marriage, and so on. One is only drawing attention here, then, to a few threads of meaning within a vast composition; with the danger, in making such a selection, of doing violence to the subject as a whole.

The great mystery of motherhood begins to be expressed in the very opening verses of the Bible. The creation of the world in the strict sense, that is to say, its coming into being out of sheer nothingness, is clearly enough asserted there; but what is also treated of is a sort of moral or virtual nothingness which is preserved at the heart of the world, out of which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, its own finished, perfect state of being has to be born. What the Bible, in fact, normally describes as Creation is not sheer being coming out of sheer nothingness, but a perfection of being engendered by God's power out of a mothering poten-

tiality in nature. In that sense the world has not been truly Created until the Cosmos has been born out of the Chaos.

To begin with, then, the world is presented in a state of Chaos. It is full of darkness waiting for the light; it is beneath the waters waiting until they should be divided and the dry land lifted up out of the deep; it is 'waste and void', that is to say, it is empty and formless waiting until its true order and formation shall be shaped out of it. This already expresses, as if in a parable, the idea of Motherhood joined to that of Virginitv. The Virginitv consists in this, that the world is ready (as it were) to wait upon God, upon the action of the Holy Spirit, to bring about its fulfilment; content, in the meantime, to rest in a sort of nothingness. So at the heart of the world, at the heart of life, there must be a principle as of a holy Virginitv if it is to be divinely Created. Supposing it could not endure to wait upon God for its fulfilment but turned to some other imagined principle of life to give it light (or glory), to establish it on firm ground, to confer significance upon its life, —then it would have lost its Virginitv unto God. Then the Holy Spirit would not come down upon it, nor the power of the Most High overshadow it. It would not be divinely fruitful. In this deep sense, therefore, Virginitv and Motherhood are inseparable parts of one whole mystery.

It is said that the Blessed Virgin crushes the Serpent's head; or it is also said that she is the '*Turris draconi impervia*', that Tower of strength against which the Dragon can never prevail. What do they stand for, then—these biblical figures of the Serpent and the Dragon? For it would seem very confusing if, as is generally simply said, they stand for the very principle of Chaos. They do indeed stand for chaos, but for an ultimate unholy, sterile chaos, and not for this holy, mothering Chaos that is part of the mystery of Creation. In fact they precisely stand for and embody the denial, or the rejection, of this holy Chaos. They embody that spirit of pride which, if it can infect nature, shuts up the womb of its Nothingness towards God. No more is there any falling back to that point of a sheer creatureliness, to that condition as of un-Createdness which is necessary if there is to be a divine Creation, a divine fruitfulness. The waiting upon God in that state until by his power the desire of life should be fulfilled seems intolerable, and nature gives herself to whatever principle it may be that promises immediate life and the saving of her from the need of

ever knowing this terrible Chaos. A createdness is sought—and promised by the evil spirit—that need not be based on creatureliness, need not spring out of a holy nothingness. But the order of life so fashioned, is not really fashioned at all, since only God can make life. It pretends to be a sort of Cosmos, but it is no Cosmos. It is Chaos pretending to be Cosmos, that has therefore lost its fruitfulness. It is an unholy, *sterile* Chaos.

The roots of sin are here laid bare. Pride, with all its possible concomitant elements of fear, disbelief, etc., partakes of this anti-creational spirit which will not accept the way of birth out of a nothingness-of-self. It demands to *be*; it cannot bear to lose its life in order to find it, to die in order that a new life may be born. Its desire of life must not be crossed, even for a moment, even by God; its own notions of what is its own true life must not be interfered with. And so it is never fertilised, since no outside principle (no principle of 'otherness') is allowed to penetrate and inform it. It is inspired by the devil, but this is no quickening influence. It is simply involved by the devil in an endless welter of sameness; of sameness struggling to enlarge or secure whatever it may already possess or have imagined for itself of life. The evil spirit cannot husband it, in order that it may bear new life, but only lashes it up in a futile, endless longing. When that evil spirit should be exorcised and the world lie open again to be pierced by the sword of the creative will of God, then the ultimate mothering principle of life would have been restored.

For the meaning of the Fall, the meaning of sin was that that mothering principle was lost—the mystery of holy Chaos lost. The moment had come when it was required of man to collaborate with the Holy Spirit so that holy life might be born in him anew. He was to have life more abundantly; but the Temptation was that he should think to attain it cheaply—as it were; as life that he might snatch at, like plucking, snatching fruit from a tree, and not as life that should be born, blessed fruit of the womb, begotten by the will of God. Even to Adam and Eve that word applied: 'Unless a man be born again . . . he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God'. No one can enter into a new reach of true life except by a dying to the former self and a giving birth to a new self. Only the new-born self of us can advance into the Promised Land of the greater life that is continually prepared for us. But Eve was tempted into denying this mystery of motherhood; and

'the Mother of all the living', as she should have been, thus became the harlot, the paramour of the Beast.

It is as though the whole creational economy was now undone, the whole creational order and process arrested. The sun would still rise, but there would be nothing truly 'new, under the sun'. The sources of the world's true life were blocked: for it no longer rested over the Deep—the mystery of the Deep having been denied. It was now built up high and dry, with no fountain of new life continually springing up, pressing up from where its deep Nothingness should be presented to the Holy Spirit to act upon. 'The Holy Ghost shall *not* come down upon me, the power of the most high shall *not* overshadow me', is what Eve had in effect said. Holy life, therefore, is no more born in the world. The world has become sterile; and so it must remain until the hard heart is pierced, and the Holy Spirit again penetrates into its depth. The Wisdom that they resorted to at the instigation of the devil was a false wisdom in contradiction to the Wisdom that has its Beginning in the 'Fear' of the Lord, and to that Wisdom of the Cross which says to God: 'Be it done unto me according to thy Word'. This false wisdom effects no renewal of life: it is not like a tree-of-wisdom that cross-fertilises the tree-of-life. For it knows nothing of sacrifice; it only knows how to flatter life, pretending to it that it can be fulfilled without being continually re-created. It is the situation, says this false wisdom, which must be changed, but not you and your desires. You must be accommodated, and you can be. But the Commandment of God, the Word of God given to Adam and Eve did not accommodate them: it only seemed to them to thwart them. So it did not seem to them to represent Wisdom, to have anything of creative promise in it. They must preserve their lives against this threat, harden their heart lest it should be so pierced, or, in other terms, cause the deep womb of nature to be closed against the fathering power of God. But there would be a new Adam whose heart would be pierced by a spear; and a new Eve whose soul a sword would pierce.

The first Adam failed to play the part of a true husband to his wife. He did not 'keep' the garden of her soul, in which should have been sown the seed of the word of God, although at the cost of sacrifice, although with a sort of shedding of blood—as Christ in his agony (in that Temptation of his in the Garden) shed his blood into the soil of Gethsemane. When Eve reached out to take

what she thought would fulfil their happiness, in defiance of God, Adam should have controlled that impulse of her nature, should have mastered her in the strength of the will of God. Then a holy life would have been conceived in her, and between them there would have been the realisation of the mystery of marriage. He should have said to her something like: *Quid mihi et tibi, mulier?* The fruit on the tree was a sort of sign and sacrament of a fruitfulness that must be realised in them, in their human nature. But Eve snatched at it and took it in the hope that it would provide a sort of magic escape from the need, the painful need, to bear fruit of grace within her own nature. (Like the woman at the well misinterpreting the water of life that Christ said should spring up within her, as a sort of magic water she might acquire and so be freed from the labour of drawing from the well; or like the crowd that cried out to be given 'always' 'that bread', only understanding it as a magical provision that would save them from all the toil of life. Or like some of us Catholics, perhaps, in the way we can reach out to the Holy Eucharist, forgetting that its power and its purpose is to enable us to become fruitful in our own natures, in our own selves.)

But to the second Eve we can precisely say: 'Blessed is the fruit of thy womb'. She did not snatch at any fruitfulness, in defiance of God, but consented to become fruitful in herself, according to his will and in the strength of his Holy Spirit. And that she was immune from sin, free from all taint of sin, and perfectly surrendered to God was due to the virtue of Christ's Passion working within her, that is to say, to the working within her of the power of Christ's own acceptance of the will of God. It was through his virtue, then, that she was divinely fruitful. He was her lord and her saviour, though he was her son. Whereas she gave him birth physically, according to the Spirit she was his bride, and came forth from his side.

She was safeguarded, then, the Blessed Virgin, against Temptation by the working in her of Christ's own power over the Tempter. For although not in point of time, yet according to the inner reality, they were tempted together: they were partners in temptation and in the overcoming of temptation. The scene of the Annunciation seems idyllically peaceful and gentle; yet at the heart of it there was a tremendous ordeal like that of Christ in his agony or in his encounter with the devil in the wilderness. The

lovely calm of the scene at Nazareth came as the stilling of a mighty storm—no less a storm, in fact, than that of the original Chaos! For in this Woman, at this moment, God is recreating the world. 'The Lord possessed me in the Beginning of his ways . . .'; 'I have penetrated into the bottom of the deep, and have walked in the waves of the sea.' There is no Catholic who should not know how truly the mystery of the transcendent creational Wisdom is verified in the Blessed Virgin. By her act of abandonment to God, of perfect faith, all that had been built up of pseudo-creation, stifling the play of the world's Nothingness towards God, is swept away, and the Depths again let free. Mary accepts the darkness, lets the waters go over her head, is ready to lie low, waiting upon God. So the Holy Spirit moves over her, and the power of the most high overshadows her. The great mothering Deep is restored.

Here is a new beginning; not a patching up of sin. There is an innocence here not as of a forgiven sinner, but that reaches back beyond the Fall of man, behind the Fall of Eve, restoring an utterly original goodness and holyness, restoring 'Creation'. This maid of Nazareth, this gentle sweet creature, is indeed as young and fresh as the world when it came from the hands of God; yet also you can say that she is as ancient as time as it reaches back into the eternity of God: infinitely older than poor sinful woman, to whom a certain kind of romantic snobbery loves to attribute a magical-wise seniority. The poor sinner is a newcomer; and yet already stale. Mary is ancient, yet ever young.

The *Fiat mihi* ('Be it done unto me') which she spoke to the angel can be made to sound so purely gentle; but it is a tremendous word, reaching out to the creative word of God, to the divine *Fiat lux*, etc. ('Let there be light . . . let there be a firmament'.) That which says *Fiat* to the creative Word of God is nothing less—or, one might say, nothing more—than the world's Nothingness, the world's Chaos. That here at Nazareth the great Chaos should have been let loose again—that is, indeed, at first a startling conception. But so it is. It was required of the Blessed Virgin to abandon herself to God in a spirit of pure faith. What was announced to her was according to all human reckoning as unacceptable as the Word spoken to the first Eve—'Thou shalt not eat of this tree'. Mary must believe that she will be fruitful although naturally speaking the conditions of human fruitfulness are with-

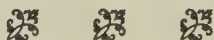
held. As the scene unfolds to us, it all seems so easy, so natural! Such a gracious messenger—who would not simply trust him? It would have been easy, though, for us not to trust him, but to regard him as an angel of darkness, as the first Eve regarded the devil as an angel of light!

The whole context (Isaias, chap. VII ff.) in which the prophetic sign of the Virgin and Child is set helps us to read into the deep issues of this mystery of Nazareth. The sign was given to the king who, when the situation, humanly speaking, was desperate would not believe that God could save him. Unless he could establish himself on some naturally promising foundation he could conceive no hope; whereas the truth was: 'You will not be established unless you can have *faith*'. And the *true* sign of salvation, for which he had no use, was then in fact declared to him: 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive . . .'.

And now at Nazareth that Virgin conceives. In the strength of her utter faith in God she conceives; in the strength of her passionate complete abandonment to the creative power of the Holy Spirit; in her ultimate virginal readiness to find only in God—in nothing at all apart from God, short of God—the power that would save her, render her fruitful. Her act of surrender to God is passionate: it is not, as it were, to be seen as a pious damping down of the forces of nature, but as their mighty release. Life is here being freed from all the constriction and frustration and sterility brought about by sinful egotism—by all the uncreative ways in which, in the attempt to fulfil it without the need of sacrifice, it had become stifled. But now there is a bursting of these bonds and nature is thrown up against God, thrown back unto God, as in the original holy Chaos when the great deep was lashed up in a storm, and the spray leaped up to the sky. '*Turbata est, et cogitabat qualis est ista salutatio.*' And 'I know not man', she says. Between her and God there is nothing. For the moment the whole world for her has lost light—she is in a holy darkness; the waters have gone over her head and she has no foothold, but only her trust in God. There is only a passionate beating back to God, out of and beyond the order of this world, a torrential beating back to God mightier than all the frustrated desires of the world let loose again.

It is a movement, then, of a tremendous, passionate self-surrender to God; and of a divine conception. So long as life seeks to

save itself, or to find salvation anywhere apart from God, it is sterile; but if it can be abandoned to God, immediately it conceives by his power, although it may not know this, although the new holy life may be long in coming to birth. Out of the Chaos surrendered to God a new world, a holy world will certainly be raised, although not perhaps in one moment. The Mystery is now restored for all the world—the mystery of holy conception and birth, of true creation. ‘Puer natus est nobis, filius datus est nobis.’ If the Holy Child were given to us merely to worship there on the lap of the Blessed Virgin, that would hardly save us—that is not what the salvation of the world means. Our salvation lies in this, that now within our own nature—by a participation in the Mystery of Mary’s motherhood—divine birth can take place. Everywhere that mystery is available, everywhere the world can be filled with God.



TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

THEE God we praise. But to speak of this Godhead I dare not presume, for since I cannot prove, nor conceive thine hid works, that thou hast made in a creature, what should I say to the maker that is a creator? For all philosophers that have laboured in divers sentences, as in grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, all, they proved by reason in their faculties, till they came to one point, that was called, *prima causa*. And here they stood still and could proceed no further. And that first causer, they said, might well be called a God. And so we, to the same first causer of all things, we say: *Te Deum Laudamus*. ‘Thee God we praise’, that art so curious a maker of diversities of things. And *Te dominum confitemur*, ‘we knowledge thee’, a lord that of everything art so wise a disposer and so noble a keeper. And not only we with our wits praise God thus, but also *Te eternum patrem omnis terra veneratur*! ‘All the regions of the earth worship thee everlasting Father.’ In this name ‘earth’ we may understand three places, the first, the earth of living folk, that is the bliss of Heaven as David saith: *Credo videre bona Domini in terram viventium*: ‘I hope to see the goodness of our Lord in the

earth of quick people'. The second is the earth of dying folk, and that is this world here, where we all shall yield our bodies under the bitterness of death; and of this Holy Church saith: *Media vita in morte sumus*: 'In this middle life we be in death'. The third is the earth of horrible death that is called *terra mortis*. And this is the pit of hell, where life is dyingly and death livingly. And of this place Holy Church crieth to God that our souls come not there saying: *Libera me, Domine, de morte eterna*: 'Lord deliver me from everlasting death'.

All these earths be thy places and to thee they offer reverences, in token that our praising should be the stronger for them. And what quick folk are they that praise thee most? For sooth, *Omnes Angeli tibi, coeli et universae potestates*: All angels whose nature is incorruptible, all heavenly persons and their powers. These angels be set in nine orders and three hierarchies or estates and all these be called the sons of God. In the first hierarchy be Angels, Arch-angels and Virtues; and in the second, principalities, powers and dominations. In the third be Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim. And all these at one; *incessabili voce proclamant*, crying, and saying in their bliss: *Sanctus, O Theos*, holy God in thyself, in thy angels and glorified souls. *Sanctus yskyros*, strong Lord in heavenly creatures, as the moon, sun and stars, planets and winds. *Sanctus athanatos*, holy undeadly, against our bodily death, against our ghostly death and against the death of hell. And set above all these our imaginations, thou art, *Dominus dominantium*, Lord of Lords, *Deus deorum*, God of gods, and *Sabaoth*, mighty leader of hosts, and many more, and therefore thy high might is so unspeakable, I can not say. But *Pleni sunt coeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae*. 'Heavens and the earth be filled with thy might'; and that causeth that men gladly left their own wills to follow meekly thy will, as *gloriosus apostolorum chorus* whom thou madest sovereign preachers, that comforted people and kingdoms to thy law. Among whom *Te prophetarum laudibilis numerus*, as glorious forspeakers of thy worthy works that had insight of thy coming, some in sleeping, some in bodily images, some in childhood, some in age, some in their mother's womb, some in great travail, some in great anguish, [they] joyed in thee. And so, *Te martyrum candidatus laudet exercitus*. 'The white company of martyrs praise thee', offering to thee the red blood of their torments, the great studies in thy laws as did confessors, and the wilful cleanness in all their works, as holy virgins.

—And as all these joy before thee by continual praising in the high church of glory, likewise to our power *Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur ecclesia*: thee praise, by all the world, the fighting church on earth, as labourers, craftsmen, merchants, knights, judges, kings, religious, low curates and high prelates—all we say: thou art three persons and one God. And *Patrem immensae maiestatis*, ‘Father of the high majesty’, thou hadst with thee everlastingly, *Venerandum tuum verum et unicum Filium*, ‘an only Son, worshipful and true’; and of two cometh the same God in power majesty and evenhood, that our faith calleth *Sanctum quoque Paraclitum Spiritum*, ‘an holy and a comfortable Spirit’. But for as much as nature loveth most that thing that has most likeness to itself, as it sheweth by every beast that hath life, on the same wise we see more verily before the Father and the Holy Ghost, [our] likeness and similitude in the Lord Jesus, and in manifold goodness and benefits thou hast tenderly cherished us; therefore by way of praising to thee specially we say, *Tu rex gloriae Christe*: ‘thou Christ art King of glory’, and not a king new begun as earthly kings, as mortal be in earth, but *Tu patris sempiternus es filius*: ‘thou art the everlasting Son of the Father’ that begat thee without beginning of time or ending. And also thou art the son of the maiden Mary, of her made man and born in a gracious time for us all. This great benefit was done of thee for no merit of angels, neither man, but only of thy great charity and benign gentleness that thou hadst towards us. Wherefore to open to us the virtue of thy love, *Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti virginis uterum*: ‘to deliver man from danger that he brought himself in, thou loathedst not the virgin’s womb’, to be closed in so little a place, whom before, heavens and earth might not hold; as Holy Church rehearseth in great commendation of thy mother Mary, saying: *Quem caeli capere non poterant tuo gremio contulisti*. And in that manhood, Lord, after many passions, as hunger, cold, thirst, awaiting of death by Herod, in young age, another time at the hill, when they proposed to cast thee down, and so to have broken thy neck, another time to have slain thee with stones and many other perils, thou didst choose a death and a time according thereto, although it were most shameful, it were yet for us most necessary. And in that benign passion, *Tu, devicto mortis aculeo aperuisti credentibus regna caelorum*, the prick of death overcome and dissevering made between thy blissful soul and body, then at first thou openedst to

all peoples believing, the kingdom of heavens, that before was straitly shut; and after thy resurrection to present our nature with worship to thy Father, and from thence at end of the world, *Judex crederis esse venturus*: thou art believed to be a judge over us all. Glad may we be that the highest judge of the King's Bench in heaven is in our clothing, great homeliness may we have with him that keepeth so cleanly our king without corruption and is our advocate and shall be our judge. But yet I dread some-what, because the office of a justice is to be dreaded, and we oft have fouled and spotted our clothes, lest he should be highly grieved; therefore ere the time of judgment come, *Te ergo quaesumus famulis tuis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti*: We, thy servants, beseech thee to help us in our tribulations that with thy dear blood hath bought us, for in this world is short reward, in purgatory is sharp reward, in hell is cursed reward and desperate; And therefore, above all these places, *Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari*: ordain that our reward may be with thy saints in everlasting joy. And though we pray this generally, as the order of charity asketh, for all the people of the world, yet, good Lord, have a more special and merciful eye to Christian religion, as we cry and say, *Salvum fac populum tuum domine et benedic hereditati tuae*: Make thy people safe, for they come nearest to thine heritage of heaven, granting to it thy blessing and with thy foregoing grace. *Rege eos et extolle illos usque in aeternum*: govern them and extol them, till they may come to thee that yet be tarried with bodily sickness and worldly grievances, notwithstanding in their loves and desires, with joyful weepings they say to thee only, *Per singulos dies benedicimus te*: Lord 'by all days, we bless thee' whatsoever thou sendest to us, be it weal or woe, gladness or heaviness; with one intention *Laudamus nomen tuum in saeculum, et in saeculum saeculi*, we praise thy name Jesu, at end of our prayer as heartily, as sharply as we did at the beginning. And because we ought every day to be ready for thy counsel and because our nature is feeble and weak and inclined much to sin, we pray thee, *Dignare domine die isto sine peccato nos custodire*. This day, that is, the last day, that we have awaited, to keep us from sin deadly, and specially sloth. And what keeping is it that we desire? whether it be earthly riches, continual health, favour of fleshly friendships?—nay Lord, nay, all this is false at need, but we desire thy mercy while we live. And therefore we say, *Miserere nostri Domine*, and thy mercy when we be

passed forth from this rotten body, saying eftsoons, *Miserere nostri*. And also thy mercy for all that be in pains of purgatory and long have abided thy mercies, in the name of whom we pray thee, as for their means, *Fiat misericordia tua domine super nos quemadmodum speravimus in te*, let thy mercy be made upon us as thy coming was for us, and as we trust verily in thee; and whoever hopeth best in thee or best doeth, thinketh or worketh for the love of thee, among them meekly, Lord, I set myself, and say with them, *In te Domine speravi*: 'in thee Lord I have hoped'. All this is in my own manner, and fain I would I could do better. But good Lord, there as I am unsufficient, amend me, chastise me, scourge me here in this life so that, *non confundar in aeternum*: 'that I be not shamed nor lost without end'. Amen.

This little meditation, courteous Father almighty, vouchsafe to receive with a benign cheer, that I, simple and wretched creature offer to thy majesty, beseeching Lord, that as I have manfully asked thy mercy, that I may have that mercy, and make in me a meek spirit in thought, word and deed, that if heaviness come of any cause inward or outward, blessed Saviour, *Da nobis auxilium de tribulacione*, grant me help and strength for that tribulation, so that I may evermore turn again unto thee, rest in thee, desire every person's welfare for the worship of thee, so that all we as thy chosen children, with one will, may ever be ready to sing and say with heart and mouth, *Te Deum laudamus*. Amen.

—Ms. Bodl. 423, fol. 161. (C.K.)

MOSAIC AND MYSTERY

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

IN Ravenna, on a spring morning, it is easy to believe that the untroubled achievement of the early Christian mosaics reached a point of fidelity to the Christian mystery which was never to be matched again. The immense volume of medieval carving in the round, the seven centuries of religious painting in the West, the whole story from Duccio to Matisse: it would be fantastic to deny the religious meaning of such a *Benedicite* of the things of men's hands. But, confronted in Ravenna with the unique evidence (in the West, at least) of a representation of the Christian mystery that has known no later modification, here in the empty basilicas with nothing to interrupt the full impact of those eloquent walls, one is led to a simple acceptance. Here, it seems, is the nearest men may come to representing the mystery *as such*, for the medium itself demands nothing less or more than this. And, as it happened, there were in this place and at this time (the fifth and sixth centuries) men who worked to the pattern that mosaic art demands.

The mystery can never be adequately told: the infinite gradations of word and meaning are in the end an approximate comment *about* the truth they seek to declare. But the artist is not concerned with the rational justification of a transcending truth. He can only penetrate the mystery within the limits his art allows: he seeks to say 'as if': his final account must be the symbol which hides—but reveals. And so it is that the realistic representation of, shall we say, the sacraments (which are a *sign*) can move us to wonder or pity or peace. But most often it is not the mystery itself that is served: it is the effect of it in terms of our response to it, another form of the preacher's homily.

The art of mosaic can make no concessions to the easy response of emotion, of the *after*-effect. These cubes of coloured stone and glass, cemented into a unity to fill apse or transept, demand a formality, an impersonality even, that must go beyond an event recalled, a figure drawn. Realism is grotesque within this ordered hierarchy of colour and considered forms. To impose ecstatic gesture or facial torment would be as barbaric as, say, to sing plain-

chant with the personal hyperboles of an Italian opera-singer. Thus in Ravenna, the severity of style, the deliberate sacrifice of realistic representation, is in fact demanded by a faithful understanding of what the medium of mosaic can properly achieve. And it happens that such an economy is the truest artistic account of the sacred: the truest, because it is the least embarrassed by the insurgent demands of 'self-expression'.

The simple use of symbol—sheep and sheaves and the monograms of Christ—is the extreme expression of this abstraction from a realistically-conceived account of the mystery. But, even, as in San Apollinare Nuovo, where the mosaics recount the events of Christ's life they do so most formally. The Last Supper is a circle of apostles' heads, with Christ reclining, about a table on which loaves and fishes are laid. There is no strain, no comment; and strong beneath it lies the hidden reality. Or again, the martyrs, white-robed and triumphant, proceeding on each side to the central triumph of the enthroned Redeemer, have no pain or passion: the mystery they exist to declare is beyond any human attempt at re-enacting it. And the supreme mystery of the Baptism of Christ (in the Arian Baptistry: there is another version in the Baptistry of the Orthodox) is conveyed with stillness and an almost liturgical solemnity. The half-submerged figure of Christ governs this scene with infinite authority: and beyond the circle of Father, Son and Holy Ghost (with John the Baptist plunging Christ into the waters) there is the wider circle of the Apostles bearing their crowns in triumph. Here are alpha and omega: the central mystery of our incorporation in Christ, and the widening circles reveal its reach beyond anything that a mere narrative art could explain.

The symmetry of forms, hierarchic and grave, is a purely symbolic account of the mystery in terms that do not intrude upon its hiddenness. And the splendour of colour—the green of the pastures in San Apollinare in Classe, the blue of heaven in the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, and the abiding effect of regal purple and the white of martyrs—all this is an assertion of mystery *as such*: it encloses a depth beyond the surface we see. And this is inherent in the massed use of mosaic: colour lifts the myriad fragments into a wholeness that is so much more than the sum of their parts. For that is what the plastic representation of a mystery must mean: not a copy, not a story, not a moral, but the attempt to translate

the symbol itself (the truth, supernaturally far beyond our analysis) into a form that acknowledges its limits, and in acknowledging them so far transcends them.



THE MYSTERY REVEALED

AN ANTHOLOGY

What we look for beyond seeing
 And call the unseen,
 Listen for beyond hearing
 And call the unheard,
 Grasp for beyond reaching
 And call the withheld,
 Merge beyond understanding
 In oneness
 Which does not merely rise and give light
 Does not merely set and leave darkness,
 But forever sends forth a succession of living things as mysterious
 As the begotten existence to which they return.

Laotzu Book of Tao

(Translated by Witter Bynner, n. 14).

The great wastes to be found in this divine ground have neither image nor form nor condition, for they are neither here nor there. They are like unto a fathomless Abyss, bottomless and floating in itself. Even as water ebbs and flows, up and down, now sinking into a hollow so that it looks as if there were no water there, and then again in a little while rushing forth as if it would engulf everything, so does it come to pass in this Abyss. This truly is much more God's dwelling-place than heaven or man. A man who verily desires to enter will surely find God here and himself simply in God; for God never separates himself from this ground. God will be present with him, and he will find and enjoy Eternity here. There is no past nor present here, and no created light can reach unto or shine into this divine Ground; for here only is the dwelling-place of God and his sanctuary.

Now this divine Abyss can be fathomed by no creatures; it can be filled by none and it satisfies none; God only can fill it in his infinity. For this abyss belongs only to the divine Abyss of which it is written: '*Abyssus abyssum invocat*'. He who is truly conscious of this ground which shone into the powers of his soul and lighted and inclined its lowest and highest powers to turn to their pure Source and true Origin, must diligently examine himself and remain alone, listening to the voice which cries in the wilderness of this ground. This ground is so desert and bare that no thought has ever entered there. None of the thoughts of man which, with the help of reason, have been devoted to meditation on the Holy Trinity, (and some men have occupied themselves much with these thoughts) have ever entered this ground. For it is so close and yet so far off, and so far beyond all things that it has neither time nor place. It is a simple and unchanging condition. A man who really and truly enters, feels as though he had been here throughout eternity, and as though he were one therewith.

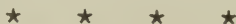
John Tauler, O.P.: *Sermon on St John Baptist*.

For thou hast brought me with thy question into that same darkness and cloud of unknowing that I would thou wert in thyself. For of all creatures and their works and of God himself a man may have fulhead of knowledge and well of them think; but of God himself can no man think, and therefore I will leave all that I can think upon and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think. And why? Because he may well be loved but not thought on. By love he may be gotten and holden, but by thought never. Go up towards that thick Cloud of Unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love and go not thence for anything that befall.

The Cloud of Unknowing.

There is in God some say,
A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here
Say it is late and dusky because they
See not all clear.
O for that Night where I in him
Might live invisible and dim.

Vaughan.



The glory of God is to conceal the word, but the glory of the King is to find it out.
—Proverbs, 25, 2.

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the Knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?
—Romans 11, 33.

The mystery of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.—Colossians 2, 2.

But you ask whether the mind is filled by the knowledge of Christ; and I reply emphatically that the mind is filled, for in him are all the treasures of wisdom. God has the knowledge of all things, and this knowledge is compared to a treasure: 'For she is an infinite treasure to men' (Wisdom 7, 14). A treasure means riches gathered; riches poured out are not called treasure, but those that are all together in one place. God however pours out his wisdom upon all his works (cf. Ecclesiasticus 1, 10); and from this point of view it is not a question of treasure; but on the other hand in that the realities of these things are united in one, namely in the divine wisdom, so are all their treasures in Christ. For wisdom is the knowledge of divine things; 'science' is the knowledge of creatures. Whatever, indeed, can be known about God in wisdom, altogether is known by God abundantly in himself; and whatever can be known about creatures he knows in a supreme way in himself. Now whatever is in the wisdom of God is in his one and only Word because he knows all things in one simple act of his intellect, since there is nothing potential or habitual in his knowledge. And therefore in this Word are all the treasures.

But St Paul adds that these treasures are 'hidden', because it happens that things are hidden from me in two ways—either on account of the weakness of my own intellectual powers, or by reason of some veil hanging in the way. A man may be unable to see a candle either because he is blind or because it is covered. Thus it is that in the Word of God are all the treasures of wisdom and understanding, but hidden from us because our eyes are not clear but cloudy. 'As yet there is only a little light in you' (cf. John 12, 35). And also it is hidden by the double veil of creatures, since our mind now can only come to that knowledge through creaturely

similitudes. 'For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made' (Rom. 1, 20). Veiled it is too by the flesh; for 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1). And so we may see something of God, but not all. 'Truly thou art a hidden God' (Isaias 45). 'Open to them thy treasure' (Numbers 20, 6). We would say that if anyone possessed a covered candle, he would not search elsewhere for a light, but rather seek to uncover the candle in his hand. And similarly, we should not seek for wisdom except in Christ. 'I judged not myself to know anything but Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 2, 2). And 'we know that when he shall appear', i.e., when he shall be revealed, 'we shall be like to him' (1 John 3, 2), for we shall know all things. If a man possessed a book wherein was to be found all knowledge, he would not wish for anything but to know that book. And so we should seek for nothing else than Christ himself.

St Thomas: *Commentary on Colossians*, 2.

Wherefore he that would now enquire of God or seek any vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly, but would be committing an offence against God, by not setting his eyes altogether on Christ, and seeking no new thing or aught beside. And God might answer him after this manner, saying: If I have spoken all things to thee in my Word, which is my Son, and I have no other Word, what answer can I now make to thee which is greater than this? . . . Thou askest locutions and revelations which are the part; but if thou set thine eyes upon him thou shalt find the whole; for he is my complete locution and answer, and he is all my vision and all my revelation; so that I have spoken to thee, answered thee, declared to thee and revealed to thee, in giving him to thee as thy brother, companion and master, as ransom and reward. . . . If thou desirest me to expound to thee secret things, or happenings, set thine eyes on him alone, and thou shalt find the most secret mysterious and the wisdom and the wondrous things of God, which are hidden in him, even as my Apostle says: 'In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'.

John of the Cross,

Ascent of Mt Carmel ii, 22.

(Allison Peers trans. i, 174-5)

REVIEWS

JÉRÉMIE. By Albert Gelin. *Temoins de Dieu*, no. 13. (Cerf, Blackfriars; n.p.)

Each volume of this series is devoted to a biblical figure who is presented as a 'witness to God' in his period of the world's history. These are biographies, but not only in the sense of examining and recording the events in a life, for the person's writings, sayings and actions are studied upon the background of contemporary events, to present a picture of the development of his thought and ideas and an assessment of his influence upon both his own and succeeding generations. All through, the series has secured the services of first-class scholars and specialists in the period. It is connected with the serial publication by the same House (which is associated with the French Dominicans) of the new translation of the Bible from the original texts, which has come to be known as the *Bible de Jerusalem* and which has earned the praise of scholars everywhere.

M. l'Abbé Gelin, a Sulpician and a lecturer at the Faculté of Lyons, has built this biography (a 'psychological biography', he calls it) upon the fruits of scholars' researches during the past fifty years. Studies on Jeremias have moved a long way since the 'radical' criticism of Duhm in 1901, and M. Gelin has made no small contribution to them.

The vivid character of Jeremias comes most strikingly to life in this book. He lived through what was both politically and religiously one of the stormiest periods in Old Testament history, and his message is therefore not without significance in the confused period of our own civilisation. Jeremias was in Jerusalem at the time of King Josias's great religious reform in 621; he saw the decline that followed; he remained during the calamity of 587-586, when the city was captured by the Babylonians and many of its people deported; he was still there during the occupation by the foreign army under the 'puppet government' of Godolias; he was at hand when Godolias was murdered by a group of 'partisans'; he was dragged off to Egypt against his will by the partisans who fled there to avoid reprisals. We follow Jeremias through these events, watching his reactions, his advice, his encouragements or denunciations: we see him helping Josias's good work, denouncing those who later overturned it, warning the people of the scourge that was to come, strengthening them when it came, and finally resolutely opposing the unruly partisans whose activity only brought further ruin on the land and eventually silenced even the voice of the prophet. The end of the story is veiled in legend, and this is glanced at in the final chapter: the story in 2 Macc. 2, 1-8 is dismissed among the legends that

grew up about the prophet, and the attribution of the Lamentations to him is also explained. The rabbinic legend that Jeremias would return is also investigated and offered as an explanation of 'Art thou *the prophet*' in John I, 21 (cf. Matt. 16, 14). But the growth of these legends is only an indication of the power of the personality of the prophet.

The present writer, having a special interest in the Minor Prophets, has had one small disappointment. At certain periods of Jeremias's tempestuous life, he had contemporaries in prophecy, and there would be interesting contrasts in treatment, or parallels. Habacuc is indeed mentioned once (p. 83) to contrast his reaction with that of Jeremias to evil and sin in the world, but further connections and comparisons with this prophet of one brief phase of the period (between Josias, 609, and the Babylonian invasions, 602) would have been valuable. Sophonias is not mentioned at all, yet he was probably one of the preachers of Josias's reform (621) together with Jeremias. Nor is the vigorous prophet Nahum mentioned, whose wild denunciations of Assyria are to be placed just before the fall of Niniveh in 612, at a time when Jeremias was preaching with hardly a mention of the Assyrians. The prophet Osee is named (p. 15) a powerful inspiration of Jeremias, but the matter of whether or not Jeremias borrowed from Abdias a section on Edom (Jer. 49, 14-16, Abd. 1-4) is not considered when the passage is mentioned (p. 84). Yet it must be admitted that, clear though the personalities of the Minor Prophets emerge from their brief writings, they are unavoidably overshadowed by the sheer mass and power of the figure of Jeremias.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

AILRED OF RIEVAULX: *DE ANIMA*. Edited by C. H. Talbot. Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Supplement I. (The Warburg Institute; University of London; 25s.)

It is a refreshing experience as one reads these pages to be reminded again of one of the masters of the spiritual life in twelfth-century England. What were the preoccupations and possible influences in the formation of the mind of St Ailred, it is the business of Dr Talbot's long and painstaking introduction to determine. The work *On the Soul* which he has edited was the last to come from the saint's pen, and it was at least unrevised if not unfinished at his death in 1167. Dr Talbot considers that since the plan of the work appears to have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, the former is the more likely view.

Its importance, for those who have some knowledge of St Ailred's other teaching, will probably be seen to lie not in its intrinsic value—it is not more, and often confessedly less, adventurous than its sources—but in the added witness it bears to his community of spirit with the primitive Cistercian family. Dom Anselm le Bail, whose opinion in

such a matter commands our respect, has written that, for them, the treatise on the soul or its equivalent was the keystone of all their teaching on the sanctification of man. It would be too sweeping to say that these leaders of the monastic renaissance left method to take care of itself. But it is true that, unlike those of later centuries, they preferred to give their attention to the soil and the tools of the trade—was there here the perspective of Cassian's first Conference?—confident that if these were studied, the desired fruit would flourish like a natural growth.

They began then with the soul itself. Clearly for Ailred the presiding genius in these reflections is Augustine, and even without the word of Walter Daniel we could judge how long he had browsed on the master of his predilection from the ease and readiness with which he quotes from and alludes to him. Amidst much that will seem to the modern reader merely 'quaint' there is a seriousness in this repeated discussion of the familiar mental trinity, *memoria, ratio, voluntas*, which is a salutary reminder of what a very *Christian* thing the science of the soul is. Although the penny catechism answer to the question, 'Which are the powers of your soul?' is still, 'The three powers of my soul are my memory, my understanding and my will', how far we are from the rich content that these words implied for Augustine and those who fed on him! It was perhaps one of the more unfortunate accidents of history that when a properly Aristotelian psychology relegated the technical use of 'memory' to a sense power, the suggestive if not always definable *reality* to which St Augustine referred tended to get mislaid. It may very well be that until, in our own terms, we can find it again, we shall never quite overcome the besetting danger of a spirituality that gets disconnected from everything really personal because it cannot reconcile conscious ideals and endeavour with a mysterious development that must be allowed to come from the very roots of our being. It is only too easy, where works such as Ailred's *De Anima* are not regarded as of purely historical interest, for them to become an occasion of archaïcising. For this reason, perhaps, translation into English would not be immediately valuable to an unprepared public. But there is a great call for someone sympathetic with the atmosphere and aims of monasticism, yet aware of all that has happened since houses like Rievaulx swarmed with religious as a hive with bees, to work out by patient prayer and reflection a new synthesis for which many souls would discover they are hungry.

ÆLRED SQUIRE, O.P.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE CONSIDERED IN ITS APOSTOLIC ASPECT. By a Carthusian Monk. Revised and edited by the Prior of Parkminster. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

The Prior of Parkminster tells us in his Foreword that the popularity

of this little book, originally written in French towards the end of the last century, is evidenced by the fact that an eleventh edition was published in 1932. It was translated into English in 1910 and now appears substantially the same, but in a more up-to-date form.

The special purpose of this book was, and still is, to remove a very commonly accepted opinion that the contemplative religious life is in reality a self-centred life, concerned only with the spiritual progress of its members, and to prove that, contradictory as it may seem at first, this life is essentially 'apostolic' in character. 'Although the primary purpose of the contemplative life is the direct praise and love of God', says Fr Eugene Boylan, O.C.R., in his Introduction, 'it may be fairly said that its value for the salvation of souls is at least as great as that of any other form of religious life.' (p. x.) This is an almost too humble claim: it would hardly be too much to say that the value of the contemplative life for the salvation of souls is greater and more effective even than directly active work for souls just because the life is immediately concerned with the praise and love of God. A life lived for God in himself alone must surely necessarily include all his creatures and their welfare. Contemplatives, in fact, may be said to help souls 'through, with and in' our Lord whose 'hidden life' they strive to follow.

This edition follows for the most part the arrangement of the earlier English edition of 1910. But some passages have been re-written to bring the book into line with modern days. Part I deals with the contemplative life in itself; its nature and its necessity in these irreligious and God-less times in which we live.

Part II provides some typical examples of contemplative religious life. Chapter XIII ('Lay Religious') is a new addition and is concerned with a very important aspect of religious life, contemplative or active, namely the life of the order as lived by the lay-brothers and sisters of each community. These brethren and sisters are called 'lay' because, in the first case, the brothers do not enter Holy Orders and in the second case, the sisters are not bound to the Choral Office, like the choir-nuns; both brothers and sisters are chiefly occupied with the material work of the communities to which they belong. But today we try to avoid stressing the distinction between choir and lay members, and to insist rather upon the essential oneness of vocation, and to make it possible for all to share as far as can be in the liturgical life, the community life in general.

It should be remembered that although it has become practically the rule, nowadays, for choir-monks to be ordained priests, this ordination is in no sense essential to monastic life which is a complete vocation in

itself. Formerly, the greater number in a monastic community remained simple monks till the end of their lives, only a sufficient number being ordained for the needs of the community—to celebrate Mass and administer the Sacraments. In at least one Benedictine community, nowadays—that of Prinknash Abbey, Gloucester—permission was given by Rome, while still on Caldey Island, to profess for the Choir certain members who would not go on to the Priesthood. There is quite a number of such ‘non-priest choir-monks’ now at Prinknash and in its dependencies of Farnborough and Pluscarden, as well as ‘lay-brothers’.

In his outline of a representative time-table of life in a Benedictine monastery, the author makes the curious omission of Compline though every other Hour of the Divine Office is mentioned at the special time of day at which it is celebrated. In a future edition of this excellent book the omission might be corrected and it might be of interest to mention a privilege concerning the Choral Office, recently granted by Rome to all Benedictine communities wishing to adopt it. This consists in abandoning the custom observed up till now of celebrating the conventual Mass on ordinary days after Terce, on ferial days after Sext and on fast-days after None and in Lent, celebrating the ferial Mass after *all three* Little Hours. What takes place really, in this arrangement, is that, instead of the Mass being celebrated *after* the particular Office or Offices, it is the latter which are celebrated *before* the Mass—of which the usual time is not at all altered. Hence, these offices are pushed back from their original times (at midday and from 2.30 to 3 p.m.) to the early morning. In the same way during Lent, in order to take the one ‘full meal’ of the fast-day after Vespers as ordered of old, Vespers is pushed back before the time of the meal and the whole of the Office (except Compline) is finished before midday.

The privilege referred to above now allows the Conventual Mass to be celebrated always after Terce—even in Lent. Sext can be recited either immediately after the Mass, or at its real time, 12 midday; None either at midday or, again, at its real time, 2.30 p.m. (‘about the middle of the eighth hour’, says St Benedict in his Rule c.xlviii: Of daily manual labour). During Lent, Vespers may now be chanted at the usual time—afternoon or evening. All this is based upon the principle that it is more in accordance with the liturgical spirit that the Church’s prayer should consecrate the chief moments of the day—sunrise, early morning, midday, afternoon, evening—and so fulfil, as far as human conditions allow, the injunction of our Lord: ‘that we ought always to pray and not to faint’, (Luke 18, 1); rather than by upsetting that order of prayer, in order to preserve a mere memory of the older practice of fasting.

WHAT IS THE MASS? By H. Chéry, O.P. (Blackfriars; 5s. Cloth 7s.6d.)

Père Chéry's book is not the perfect book on the Mass, but it falls little short of a very high standard. In just over a hundred pages the author contrives to say at greater or less length all that we need to know about the centre of the Christian life. The book is divided into four parts: doctrine, history, liturgy, practical methods. Such an amount of material is satisfactorily compressed into so small a space because Père Chéry writes with true perspective, and in each section the less important topics are granted less space. The history of the liturgy provokes books 'bogged down in scholarship'. Père Chéry's historical section is a model of proportion and good sense: for instance, while four pages are devoted to the Mass in the Scriptures, the history of the Church's liturgy in the last four centuries is sketched in succinct sentences such as, 'Some proper prefaces have been added'. Similar balance may be observed in the liturgical section: 'liturgical things' such as altar linen, vestments and colours are put in their places and the bulk of the section is devoted to a study of the form of the Mass. The last section, practical despite excursions into theory, is a lucid explanation of the place of the Mass in the Christian's life. The book has found a worthy translator in Mr Sheppard, a writer who never wastes his readers' time. His own deep sense of the Communion of Saints fills the English version.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

LA MESSE, APPROCHES DU MYSTÈRE. Par A.-M. Roguet, O.P. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars; 6s.)

The special importance of the liturgical work sponsored by the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* (of which Père Roguet is the director) is that it allies sound theology to a realistic appreciation of the needs of the apostolate. We should in this country be sufficiently familiar with the activities of liturgical publicists to appreciate the value of that sane theological learning without which the liturgical movement can degenerate into an endless pursuit of means unrelated to adequately considered ends. Père Roguet's writing is an excellent example of a theology that lives: and it lives because it is firmly rooted in scriptural and patristic tradition. It can afford to proceed to practical suggestions because it has first established the basic theological truths which liturgical 'action' exists to declare.

In his latest book (in the series *L'Esprit Liturgique*) Père Roguet considers the Mass as a 'mystery', avoiding equally the divergent emphasis of the work of archaeologists and ritualists, the books of 'meditation on the Mass, and, finally, the strictly theological discussions of 'the sacrifice of the Mass'. Such works have their value; but it is partial, it

abstracts from the Mass as an *action*, 'an action that is repeated and which cannot be artificially isolated or immobilised; a collective action, the work of the whole assembly gathered about the priest at the altar'. Thus Père Roguet begins with what we find: an assembly of people brought together to offer sacrifice to God. And it is within the context of a mystery in which the Christian people are incorporated that he goes on to discuss the elements of the Mass: preparation, praise, daily bread, sacrifice, the pledge of future glory. His purpose, he explains, is not simply to show 'that the Catholic should, when he is present at Mass, know what he is doing or that he should have "ideas" about the Mass, but rather that he should live it'. And his living of the Mass is in terms of an action in which he shares; a meal to which he is invited; a life to which he is introduced.

Such a reconciliation of theological learning with a vigorous understanding of the actual needs of the faithful is a rare achievement, and Père Roguet's book (which, in default of anything comparable in English, we hope may soon be translated) should do much to deepen the appreciation of the Mystery of Faith. The need is imperative, for books 'about' the Mass are no substitute for living it, and it is this primary function of Christian faith which Père Roguet expounds with learning—and, not least important, with sympathy.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

CHRIST IN THE LITURGY. By Dom Illtyd Trethowan, O.S.B. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

'We must not *acquiesce* in a state of affairs in which the Liturgy has ceased to form the mentality, and to be the natural expression, even of those social groups which have remained most staunchly Catholic' (pp. 94-95). Dom Illtyd's book may be regarded, not as a mere refusal to acquiesce, but as a passionate protest against this state of affairs. The Liturgy is the sign and the means of our participation in the mystery of Christ; yet it is, for probably the majority of Catholics in this country, no more than an incident even in what they might call their spiritual life. They may very readily go to Mass frequently, follow the Missal intelligently, but their participation is regarded as a good work—perhaps indeed the most important of all good works—performed by an individual. How can they be aware of the Church as Christ's body, of their common membership *in* Christ, if they are not as a community worshipping, offering, sorrowing, rejoicing with Christ?

Dom Illtyd reminds us of all this and provides those who are trying to share more intelligently and more fully in the Christian mysteries with a stimulating commentary on the liturgical year together with a number of essays bearing on the same theme. Some of the views

expressed will not command general assent. He quite clearly favours, for instance, the Scotist view that the Incarnation would have taken place even apart from the fact of sin. But he is most certainly justified in protesting against the 'commercial metaphors' to which the thomist view is often reduced in the hands of its less able practitioners. And, although the Epilogue might more suitably be called an appendix, all good thomists will agree with its main theme of an intellectual life integrated in grace, directed to eternity and finding here and now both apt expression and ample nourishment in the Liturgy.

EDWARD QUINN

THE PRIEST AS MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION. By E. J. Mahoney. (Burns Oates and Washbourne; 5s.)

Senior missionary priests in some missions have the faculty of conferring Confirmation. But this concession has been limited and for the most part the Holy See has insisted on the normal rule of Canon 788 being observed. This has meant, however, that since a Bishop alone could confer the sacrament as ordinary minister, many children as well as a good number of adults have died without the benefit of this sacrament. Though in the words of the decree *Spiritus Sancti* (September 14th, 1946), 'confirmation is not necessary for one's salvation, nevertheless its excellence and the abundance of precious gifts which it confers require that parish priests, and others who have the care of souls, must make every effort in securing that no Christian should, through lack of opportunity, forgo so great a mystery of saving redemption. It admirably assists us in our warfare against the wickedness of the devil and the allurements of the world and the flesh, obtains for us on earth an increase of grace and virtue, and in heaven an added glory.' That so many infants and children and even adults should in fact die without the help of this sacrament is a matter of grave concern to the Church. To provide against such a loss the Holy See has made a far-reaching change in his present legislation. A parish priest and others having the care of souls may now administer the sacrament of confirmation as extraordinary minister to those who are in danger of death. This new law is embodied in the decree mentioned above. Canon Mahoney gives a clear and helpful commentary on the text of the decree and on two later decrees on the same subject. Though it is meant primarily for parish priests, there is much in this book of sixty-six pages which will be read with interest and profit by the ordinary layman.

K. W.-G.

THE PRIEST IN UNION WITH CHRIST. By The Rev. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. Translated by Rev. G. W. Shelton, S.T.L. (The Mercier Press; 18s.)

Read as a sequel to the same author's *Our Saviour and His Love for Us*, it must be admitted that the present book comes rather as an anticlimax. Père Garrigou-Lagrange is one of the leading exponents of Thomist theology in our day, and when he sets out, as he does here, to consider 'the spiritual life of a priest and his special priestly functions', the reader anticipates that the subject will be treated in the light of the great tradition represented by such a master. This hope is not realised: the teaching of St Thomas, of the Fathers, of the Liturgy, are referred to comparatively little, whereas the writers of more recent times are quoted with an almost excessive frequency and veneration. The result is a somewhat loosely constructed collection of passages on various aspects of the priest's life rather than the integrated essay of simple grandeur which this book might have been.

Frequent repetitions are a consequence of this lack of unity; another, the seeming contradictions: whether, for instance, the grace of communion is the same under one or both species (pp. 74 and 79). The danger of the attempt to 'christianise' Marxist doctrine which, according to the introduction, is the first of the three main points the author proposes to underline, is not mentioned again until page 131, and then only very briefly. On page 76 there is a paragraph entitled: *The testimony of the Liturgy, as presented by Fr Olier*, quoting, in effect, what the founder of Saint Sulpice has to say about the priest's communion—but containing nothing whatever about 'the testimony of the Liturgy'. On page 127 we are told that the ciborium is 'consecrated in the strict sense of the word and not merely blessed'.

In view of what has been said it may be granted that the translator has had no easy task, and occasional obscurities such as: 'Habitual failings which affect the intellect are . . . an authoritative attitude in ruling others, or the opposite failing of extreme leniency towards those who oppress the weak' (p. 183), or needless translations like: 'John James Rousseau' (p. 124), should not prevent it being recognised that he has accomplished it carefully and, on the whole, successfully.

DESMOND SCHLEGEL, O.S.B.

L'EGLISE DE FRANCE ET LA COMMUNION DES ENFANTS. By M. Gaucheron (Rencontres. Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

LA COMMUNION SOLENNELLE EN FRANCE. By H.-Ch. Chéry, O.P. (Rencontres. Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

France is still engaged in the collective examination of her conscience, this time on the very practical and important matter of the First Com-

munion of children. It is well known that the French custom of *Communio Solennelle* at the age of about twelve made the operation of the decree of Pius X difficult to bring into effect. Various methods were tried—some of them described with mordant humour in Fr Gaucheron's book—but few seem to be satisfied with what has been achieved. To find out the exact state of affairs and to see what remedies could be applied, the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* sent out a questionnaire, the results of which are summarised in Père Chéry's book. It cannot have brought much comfort to the French clergy. There is still a certain amount of confusion and it cannot be said that Pius X's decree is fully operated. There are many problems and difficulties (which, largely thanks to our school system, we have not to face in this country), but the upshot of these two books is that the *Communio Solennelle* should become a profession of faith leading the child to look to the immediate future when he will have to take up adult responsibilities in the world. If the desiderata of the writers of these books and of those who answered their questions are fulfilled, then French youth will go out into the world well equipped to meet their responsibilities.

Perhaps these books have not a great deal to teach us in England though we must admire the zeal of the French clergy in seeking solutions to their problems, and we might consider the possibilities of a special ceremony of Profession of Faith when our children leave school.

J.D.C.

HUMANITY AND DEITY. By Wilbur Marshall Urban. (George Allen and Unwin; 25s.)

Professor Urban's book of 474 dense pages is 'an attempt at a restatement of the traditional view of the relation of God to man'. It is an answer to modern religious errors such as the exclusion of the supernatural by positivists like Comte, on the one hand, and the exclusion of the rational from religion by Barth and Brunner, on the other. This book is concerned with such subjects as the language of religion and theology, the proofs for the existence of God, the relations of religion to science, mysticism and poetry: its style is abstract and its language that of modern philosophy, which is far from that of current Catholic thought.

While one welcomes a book on religion by a serious thinker who often adopts the conclusions, if not the arguments, of great Catholic thinkers, it must be confessed that the author's criticism of religious errors such as those of Tolstoy, Kierkegaard and William James is often more convincing than his exposition of 'traditional theism'. While St Thomas is quoted more often than any other writer, and

Thomists will be interested in, if not in complete agreement with, the author's insistence on the axiological (his statement of the relation between Being and the Transcendentals is questionable), one is astonished to find attributed to St Thomas a doctrine of the necessity of the creation that was condemned by the Vatican Council.

Fundamentally, I think, the author fails to stress the complete transcendence of the Christian Revelation. For him religion 'is the great thing it is because, however varied the language it speaks, it really ultimately says the same thing'. (p. 19.) The principal Christian mysteries are or have been believed in by pagans 'quite independently of Christian influence', but the essence of religion is only to be found in its 'higher forms', and thus the differences between Christianity and Buddhism, for example, should not be exaggerated, but should be considered as 'variations on one fundamental theme' (p. 273). One wonders if Professor Urban thinks that each of the 'higher forms' of religion is equally true, equally deserving of assent.

Modernist influence is still more in evidence in the author's treatment of the Myth and the Symbolic in theology—'even the most spiritual symbols of the most moralised religions have their source in the womb of the unconscious out of which the myth and its symbols have been born'. (p. 89.)

The author emphasises that the supernatural is beyond the reach of science or poetry, but he himself appears to judge the supernatural by the light of natural reason. Thus the 'real meaning', for him, of the Incarnation is reduced to the philosophical truth of the identity of goodness and being (p. 269), while the doctrine of the creation is important especially because 'it makes one feel an extraordinary lightening of the burden, whether of obligation or fatalism' (p. 273). Similarly the mystics' teaching is accepted, because what they say corresponds to the 'religious sense' in man.

Such judgments seem to indicate, to say the least of it, an extremely faulty method, for early in the book the author admits that the possibility of Revelation is a 'basal one for any philosophical theology', yet this question is only discussed in an appendix *after* assessing the pronouncements of religion and its relation with human activities, and then in such a way as to betray subjective and merely human criteria. And nowhere does the author decide whether a supernatural revelation has in fact taken place. Instead, one is told that religious experience embodies the transcendent and 'the word of man *becomes* the Word of God'.

Thus one doubts very much whether the author shares the Catholic view of the supernatural, but even in his chosen field of natural theology the presentation is extremely incomplete. The existence of God, the

doctrine of analogy, the identification of Supreme Being and subsistent goodness are all emphasised, but Creation and Conservation, Providence and Foreknowledge are hardly mentioned. Yet all these are an integral part of that traditional theism which the book purports to represent.

Books of this kind make one realise the inadequacy of studying Christian thought in isolation from the Revelation whence it arose. The separation of humanity from deity is not a new problem but a very old one that received its answer when God became man and reconciled all things to himself on Calvary. A religion that lacks dogmatic content can never bridge the gap, but only one that is centred on the Person of our Lord, the one Mediator between God and Man.

DOM HUGH FARMER

WHAT ST PAUL SAID: *or* The Teaching of St Paul. By J. W. C. Wand, Bishop of London. (Oxford University Press: Geoffrey Cumberlege; 7s. 6d.)

Anyone who has tried to expound St Paul in the classroom, in the lecture-room, or in church, and has used the technique of partly summarising the argument, partly reading or paraphrasing the actual words of St Paul, and partly explaining in asides the circumstances and background, while welding these elements into a continuous exposition, will appreciate this book very much. Such a technique requires that the speaker have at his finger-tips on the one hand the background, be it scriptural from Acts or other Epistles or be it the general history of the times and places, and on the other hand the actual text of St Paul, together with a knowledge of the literary problems involved. Then the hearers will be able to grasp 'what St Paul said' and what his words meant to the original audiences at Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. The object of this technique is to enable hearers to appreciate the message of an Epistle as a whole, and at the same time as a section of St Paul's own developing thought. It is thus different from the task of tracing St Paul's theological doctrine from an unconnected series of scattered remarks and expositions. An important necessity is an adequate translation, preferably a translation into the idiom used by the speaker in his exposition.

Dr Wand is a master of this kind of exposition and magnificently equipped for carrying it out. This short book of 105 pages is an example of the thing in practice, being mainly a transcript of four lectures delivered to teachers in London in 1950. The four lectures are entitled: The Background, Letters of the Second Journey, Letters of the Third Journey, and Letters from Prison. The manner is extempore and spontaneous—there are no footnotes supporting opinions or weighing

arguments, to confuse the issue; yet one can see that every statement has the support of scholarship and is the result of much thought. It was in 1943 that Dr Wand first published (in Australia) his masterly paraphrase into entirely modern English of the *New Testament Letters* (first published in England by the O.U.P. in 1946). In that work, as is well known, every Greek phrase of St Paul was so carefully weighed that it was matched with a phrase in contemporary English of the most striking fidelity. That work was described at the time by the present reviewer as 'scholarly, skilful, dignified, gay and orthodox', and for the purpose of these lectures Dr Wand had to hand in his own translation a most satisfactory vehicle for the kind of exposition he used.

The Catholic reader could hardly take any but the mildest exception to any of the phrases in the *New Testament Letters*, and in these lectures he would take exception to none at all: though he might have expected more emphasis on the doctrine of the Church (Ephesians) and of the Eucharist (I Corinthians). He would approve of Dr Wand's acceptance of the authenticity of the Pastorals, but would rather not see his slight hesitation about it on pages 68 and 71. He is sad not to see Hebrews mentioned at all (Dr Wand in his translation labelled it 'anonymous'), but would not press the point, since it is not specifically excluded. With regard to the stock problems in the Epistles Dr Wand takes a quite plain (and acceptable) point of view: for instance the 'principle of lawlessness' in II Thessalonians is Caligula; the Galatians are the South Galatians, but the Epistle is written on the second journey; II Corinthians 10-13 are the 'severe' letter, written before II Corinthians 1-5, 7-9; Ephesians is an encyclical.

To the four lectures is added a fifth chapter on the Teaching of St Paul, in which the author sets out to 'run over the epistles once again' and is then 'in a position to pick out the main topics with which St Paul dealt, and so arrive at a fair idea of the proportion of his teaching'. During the exposition in the lectures, chapter and verse references are always provided in the margin of the summary or paraphrase.

The great value of this book is its vivid presentation of the personality and thought of St Paul, 'the endearing character of Paul as pastor and friend' (p. 68), and the very smallness of the canvas enables us to appreciate the portrait and its message almost at a single glance. Indeed, we might apply to the whole book the epithets applied by Dr Wand to St Paul's brief epistle to Philemon: 'It is earnest, loving, playful and pastoral'.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF FATHER STEUART, S.J. Compiled by Katherine Kendall. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

In collecting these notes of Conferences (both individual and retreat conferences) Miss Kendall has been at pains to let the 'authentic Fr

Steuart' speak. Her task was not easy, for Fr Steuart was one of those men who spoke constantly with inspiration while he published little—though his few books are still the most balanced and theologically sound spiritual treatises in English. Followers noted his retreats in long and short hand; but such reports can never be the same as the *ipsissima verba* spoken or written by the author. Miss Kendall reports honestly at the very beginning of the book a remark of Fr Steuart's: 'So-and-so has let me have shorthand notes of what I said, and it ought to be quite easy, but it isn't . . . I find I have practically rewritten it all'. Nevertheless, what she has captured here by the help of these notes from devoted listeners is surely very close to the 'authentic' Fr Steuart. He here gives a retreat to lay people, another to religious, five conferences on the Sign of the Cross and ten on various subjects. From all who hear him he expects, or rather demands, complete holiness, as Fr Lyons, S.J., remarks in the introduction; but his demand is gentle and his own words are full of the true sort of enticement: 'What Christ tells me to do, he does in me; what he calls on me to do, he calls on himself to do. Is there anything he cannot do? I am now a Christ-person, and I stick at nothing.' That is authentic. Those who have already heard Fr Steuart will find here a most effective soundboard to their memory; those who never had that privilege will find much of deep value to remember.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

THE ROMAN RITUAL: VOLUME II: CHRISTIAN BURIAL, EXORCISM, RESERVED BLESSINGS, ETC. Translated and Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by the Revd Philip T. Weller. (Bruce; \$8.75.)

It seems scarcely necessary to review in detail the last volume (in order of appearance) of Father Weller's English translation of the *Rituale Romanum*, for what was said in an extended notice of the first volume in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT for August, 1950, is generally true of this one also. Some of the material here is less familiar: the rite of Exorcism, no less than the blessing of Bread and Water in honour of St Adelheid. The latest edition of the Ritual still retains the Vulgate text of the psalms, but the translations take into account the new version of the Psalter and are on the whole rhythmical and direct in meaning. It is perhaps to be regretted that the English versions of the Litanies (especially that of Loreto) have not been attempted *de novo*, but here the familiarity of the faithful with existing translations makes innovations a perilous business. As before, the typography (in red and black, with a clear setting for plainchant) is very successful.

I.E.

NOTICES

RETREAT NOTES (Gill, Dublin; 6s.) comprise the cream from Fr Joseph Keating's notebooks skimmed by Fr Philip Caraman and set out as the background for a four-week 'Exercises'. There is nothing negative about Fr Keating's teaching—'Self-surrender does not adequately express the whole operation which mainly consists in a capture of self by God's love'. This note is maintained through considerations of Hell and Judgment. It is a very wholesome little book.

In his *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF RELIGION AND RELIGIONS* (Allen and Unwin; 30s.), Mr Royston Pike was hampered first by the vastness of the subject matter which is scarcely patient of being squeezed into four hundred quarto pages. Also, though his collaborators included men of many religions, he was unfortunate not to secure the assistance of a Catholic for entries concerning specifically Catholic affairs. In this way a number of minor inaccuracies have crept in; nevertheless it does make a useful reference book for those unacquainted with religious terminology.

THE PILGRIM'S POCKET MANUAL (5s. or 4s. 6d. in quantities) will be of great service in these days of renewed enthusiasm for making pilgrimage. It has been compiled by an experienced pilgrim and organiser, Charles Osborne, who also publishes the manual from Bishops Stortford. With the usual features of devotions, hymns and prayers one also finds hints on meditation, the Little Office of our Lady in Latin and English (with the psalms commented into the bargain). The Mass and the Sacraments claim pride of place.

LES BEATITUDES (Desclée, Bruges; 55 Belg. fr.) comprises a series of conferences broadcast on the Luxembourg radio by Mgr Chevrot, 1951-2. The author is a well-known preacher whose words also make fruitful reading. This volume will make a good retreat either for a preacher or for a follower of the exercises.

THE PROPHECY is a translation of a novel by a well-known German author, Willy Kramp (S.C.M. Press; 7s. 6d.). Set in a Russian prison camp, the story shows that prophecies may buoy you in hope, but hard facts of the present alone redeem.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST IGNATIUS. Revised edition with a preface by Fr Henry Keane, S.J. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

It would be something of an impertinence to criticise a work sanctioned by the Church over so many centuries. Suffice it to say that here we have a very useful pocket edition of this spiritual classic, well printed and well presented for the English reader.

EXTRACTS

PÈRE BENEDICT LAVAUD, O.P., introduces his article on 'Life in God and Death to Self' in the June *Cross and Crown* (Chicago) with the following important remarks:

In the New Testament we look in vain for a clear-cut distinction between such terms as moral, ascetical and mystical; between what is speculative and what is practical. Instead, the New Law is the complete revelation of the 'mysteries of God' and of 'God's Kingdom', of life in God from its lowest to its highest degrees. Although the word 'mystery' is fairly often encountered, one never finds the term 'mystic', either as an adjective or as a substantive; nor is there mention of contemplation. But all of those states which are fairly familiar to us as grace, prayer, contemplation, life and the mysterious forms of man's contact with the intimate life of God and of his Kingdom, as well as the 'charisms' or gratuitous gifts which accompany or dispose thereto: these are to be found in countless places. . . . The profound principles of contemplation are the very same as those of a simple Christian life; but in contemplation they are fully developed. Among these principles is the grace of filial adoption . . . the indwelling and presence of God in the soul. . . .

The author goes on to elaborate the mystery of life in God as the foundation to any Christian way of life and the complementary mystery of death to self.

In this issue of *Cross and Crown*, which provides the reader with a plentiful variety, is an article on hermits which begins with the story of a young hermit in Brooklyn who was eventually discovered by the police, made to wash and shave and handed over to the psychiatrists.

★ ★ ★ ★

THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART encourages religious periodicals nearly every year to return to the sources of the devotion—a necessity when devotions are so prone to cut adrift from the anchor of dogma upon which they depend for spiritual security. The editor of *La Vie Spirituelle* realising, as he says, that a great deal of the trappings of this devotion embarrasses those who are looking for a life of prayer that is biblical and liturgical, has devoted his June issue to the Mystery—*Le Mystère* once again—of the Sacred Heart. There are articles on the Scriptural and Doctrinal foundations of the devotion as well as on the seventeenth-century setting when it was brought into prominence at Paray-le-Monial. Père Heris, O.P., whose book on the Mystery of Christ will always remain a classic of the thomist exposition of the doctrine of the Incarnation, deals with the 'doctrinal foundations' concentrating in

particular on the different aspects of Christ's love. But in view of the title of the whole issue it is a pity that more space was not given to the patristic teaching on the mysteries or sacraments that flowed from Christ's pierced side. However, in his article on 'the Heart of Jesus and the Trinity', Père Jacques, S.C.J., sums up much of the tradition of the Church in this respect:

The divine love, as possessed by the Word, according to the special relation which characterises him, is the divine love of the Son of God. It can only be a filial love. And this filial love of the Word is necessarily continued in Jesus, in the created order, in his human love which is thus clothed with characteristics proper to a truly filial love. Consequently this love is pure, disinterested and truly sacrificial, all of which is specially emphasised by the worship of the Sacred Heart. . . . And just as in the Trinity, the Father and the Son give themselves to each other in the Holy Spirit, so in the Incarnation the Father gives himself to the Son also in his human nature, and the Son gives himself here also filially to the Father. The Holy Spirit, proceeding as a person in the trinitarian life of mutual divine love, completes with his own fullness the humanity of Jesus and consummates also in him the unity of the Son-made-man and the Father. So the Holy Spirit within the realms of this personal divine love fulfills all Christ's actions, while yet the unique Person of the Word remains the ultimate author of those actions.

So it is that the mystery of the Trinity is to be found most tangibly at the Crucifixion and the wound in the side, as it were, gives an exit to all the mysteries of the Godhead which pour out in the torrent of the divine self-giving love. Fr M. J. Lapierre, S.J., writes in *Review for Religious* (St Mary's, Kansas; May), of the historic choice of St Margaret Mary at the time when Jansenism was undermining the true teaching about divine love; and Fr A. J. Goodman, M.S.C., in *Sponsa Regis* (Collegeville; June), applies the doctrine to modern life and incidentally emphasises the connection between this devotion and the fact of the Blessed Sacrament, a point which is worth developing. For the Blessed Sacrament is enshrined in the Mass and necessarily forms the centre of the life and prayer of the Church. It raises the idea of a 'devotion' from that of a prayer of personal choice, often largely bound up with emotions, to that of the prayer of Christ with his Church which sanctifies the roots of the soul.

So the Liturgy must form the foundation of all prayers and devotion; and modern conditions demand that the liturgy be made more real to the Christian. In the *Downside Review* (Summer 1952) Lancelot Sheppard concludes a challenging demand for 'Liturgical Reform' by these wise remarks:

Before details of reform can be usefully discussed certain principles require first to be accepted. . . . Once the implications of 'worship rendered by the Mystical Body in the entirety of its Head and members' (*Mediator Dei*) are grasped, other things like congregational singing or answering at Mass will follow. Secondly there is a need for an authentic expression of worship. Modern man is endowed with an irrepressible need of sincerity, especially in matters of worship and his relations to God. 'He asks for an altar that is an altar and not a pedestal of flowers . . . a Mass that is truly the praise and sacrifice of a community one in faith, and not a mere rite rolling by for its own sake . . .' (Père Congar). The third principle is . . . that the liturgy is the life of the Church and the food of the faithful. . . . The worship of the Church is not a fossilised relic of former practice. . . .

What is surely needed, therefore, is a marriage between the principle popular devotions, which do not lack vitality but are often in danger of lacking the fullness of Christian doctrine, and the Church's liturgy, which often lacks popular vitality while retaining the source of all true Christian life. Fr O'Connell, S.M.A., has made a general outline of the way the devotion to the Sacred Heart could be reintegrated into the liturgical life of the Church in his article on 'Devotion to the Sacred Heart' (*Doctrine and Life*; Cork; June):

Through our adoption of sons we are always *in Christ Jesus*; Saint Paul is never done affirming this. We never go to the Father alone, and our prayers and our good actions are never merely ours. They always share in the dignity of the prayers and actions of our Head. This is especially true of our liturgical actions, above all of our part in the Mass. The Mass is the re-enacting of the sacrifice of Christ; it is the renewal of the gift of himself in love that the Sacred Heart made to his Father on Calvary. And the Mass is the sacrifice of the whole Christ, Head and members.

It is in this context that the love of 'reparation', which takes such a central position of the devotion of the Sacred Heart, may be seen in its true context.

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Just when the English Episcopate issued the joint Pastoral re-affirming the Church's teaching repudiating divorce and when the Archbishop of York had at the same time made a stand for the Church of England against the new divorce laws that are threatened, *Lumière et Vie* (Saint-Alban-Laysse) produced its fourth issue (June) which is devoted to 'Indissoluble Marriage'. True to its character the journal takes the teaching on the subject back to its sources in the Bible and the tradition and law of the Church. This number provides a most important foundation

to the present campaign against the relaxation of marriage laws. Cardinal Saliège introduces the number.

AT A LEVEL, K. Truhlar in *Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique* (December, 1951, Toulouse) writes of Mystical Experience, which he describes as a new and superior knowledge with a new and superior love or elsewhere as 'contemplation', in its relation to the virtues, both theological and moral, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the nature of grace and phenomena such as 'confirmation in grace'. The article is of value particularly in its analysis of these aspects of the gracious life.

Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk (February, 1952; Louvain) carries an article on the Kingdom of God by the late Fr von Hulse, O.P., in which he distinguishes the domain over which God rules and which is threefold, his own being, creation, and man by grace, and the dominion which God exercises over these three realms. A useful distinction which is made here very actual by applying it to the whole of modern life—'the Voice of God in the drone of engines and the screech of sirens'.

Fr J. D. Crichton in the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* (May) shows how the Divine Office is essentially Scriptural. In a short but very comprehensive article he succeeds in showing how the Office integrates the whole Bible into the Christian year and teaches the user how to interpret Scripture according to its different sense. 'The Divine Office is the ministry of the Word'—this is a complementary aspect of the prayer of the breviary and a very necessary one.

SERMONS FOR EUCHARISTIC DEVOTIONS. By The Revd John B. Pastorak. (B. Herder, London; 56s.)

A book of sermons on the Blessed Sacrament which has practically nothing to say about the Mass might seem to be wanting in proportion, but these thirty sermons (preceded in each case by a detailed outline) on such subjects as 'Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament', 'Blessed Imelda' and 'Eucharistic Congresses' are a faithful enough record of eucharistic devotion, and should be useful to those who find books of sermons a help rather than a hindrance for their own efforts.

EVE AND THE GRYPHON, by Gerald Vann, O.P. (Blackfriars; 6s. 6d.), now in its third impression, treats of Christian women, models particularly of life in the world rather than in the cloister. The book is a proved favourite.

THE CISTERCIAN MONKS OF MT SAINT BERNARD'S ABBEY, by Fr John Morson, O.C.R. (1s. 6d.), shows the history of the monastery together with the lives of the monks. Admirers and critics of Thomas Merton should read this.

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